



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 60.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S BLIND

OR
RUNNING THE DEATH GAUNTLET



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
'BUFFALO BILL'

"HERE I AM, PARD BILL, TO TAKE THE OLD HEARSE TO MY GRAVE," SAID CHISPA CHARLIE, AND A WILD YELL OF ADMIRATION BURST FROM THE CROWD.



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No. 60.

NEW YORK, July 5, 1902.

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Buffalo Bill's Blind;

OR,

RUNNING THE DEATH GAUNTLET.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE FATAL TRAIL.

"A hundred dollars a round trip to the driver who has got the nerve to drive the coach through on the run over the fatal trail!"

The loud voice of the speaker was heard by several hundred men, and a wild, reckless-looking lot they were, too, yet not one answered, not a word was heard, and a deathlike silence fell upon all.

The scene was an Overland stage station, in the far Wild West, and the place was a half-mining, half-cowboy camp, and the resort of some of the ugliest spirits in borderland.

It was a junction of stage trails, no less than four centering there, and hence it was a very important post, with half a hundred employees of the coach line gathered there to work in the stables, and a dozen of the crack drivers of borderland.

But the words of the Overland boss brought forth no response, in spite of his liberal offer, and so he said:

"Remember, pards, a hundred dollars is not picked up every day for just two days' work, so who calls me to accept it?"

Still no response.

"I'll make it a couple of hundred, men, for the run, so who calls me now?"

Still a silence that could be felt was the only response.

"Say, men, are you all so badly scared because there have been a few men shot from the box on the fatal trail, that you won't risk the drive when I say it's two hundred dollars clean cash on the run?"

Still no answer, though the crowd moved uneasily and men looked each other in the face to see who would dare the run.

"See here, pards, the Fatal Trail, I admit, is well named Death's Cañon, for I counted myself thirty-three graves there in the valley, and I don't deny that just one clean dozen of them are drivers of the Overland, killed on duty, without a word of warning.

"But the coach must go through from here, pards, to Fort Rest, and so on through Death's Cañon to Fort Famine, and back again, down one day and back another, and I say again it's two hundred for the run to the man who dares take it through.

"Who talks?"

Nobody did, and the silence was unbroken until a voice called out:

"Here comes Buffalo Bill!"

A shout, a half cheer, arose at the cry, and all eyes were turned upon a horseman who came riding toward the group at a canter.

A more splendid specimen of manhood one would not care to behold than was that horseman, William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, the king of the Wild West.

He was superbly mounted upon a large, wiry roan stallion, his equipments were of the best, and he was dressed in buckskin leggings, top boots, an embroidered woolen shirt and wide-brimmed sombrero of a dove color, one side of which was looped up by a gold buffalo with diamond eyes, and a brand upon his side in rubies of the word "Bill."

Around his sombrero was a gold cord, representing a lasso, and upon his shoulders were straps in which was a device like the pin, signifying his name and the gold-embroidered words:

CHIEF OF SCOUTS' LEAGUE.

He raised his hat politely in recognition of the welcome he received, and, glancing over the crowd, nodded at familiar faces that he caught sight of, while he asked, in his cheery way:

"What is the picnic, pards, for, if there is any fun in it, I would like to chip in?"

"There is no fun in it, Buffalo Bill, but sartain death, for the Overland boss here called the crowd together to git a volunteer ter drive the coach through on the Fatal Trail, through Death's Cañon, in truth, and, though he offers big bait, he hasn't got a nibble yet," cried a man in the crowd in response to the chief of scouts' question.

Buffalo Bill had listened most attentively to the explanation offered, every eye upon his face, which

was immovable, showing no sign of what his thoughts might be.

He looked toward Pete Porter, the Overland boss, and asked:

"Will none of the drivers take the coach out Pete?"

"Not one, Buffalo Bill, and can you blame them for being as how they are almost sure of death?"

"Well, Pete Porter, my creed is that where duty calls we must obey, if certain death stares us in the face.

"It would not do for a soldier, or a scout, to refuse to go into battle or on a trail just because he feared he would be killed."

"That's so, Bill," answered Pete Porter, while there was a murmur of approbation from the crowd as the chief of scouts expressed his views.

Then Buffalo Bill continued:

"Now, I know the drivers of the Overland as the bravest of brave men; and their duties are perilous and severe in the extreme. It is true that they have no chance to defend their lives, but are in constant dread of a deadly shot from ambush; but I guess I can pick out several in that crowd that won't slink if you call on them to take the stage through."

As the scout spoke, he glanced over the group of drivers, who had huddled together, perhaps under the feeling that misery loves company.

There were several who met his eyes, but most of them did not, and Pete Porter said:

"Well, Bill, the man who volunteers gets two hundred and fifty dollars for the round run, so if you can pick out one who will go, do so."

"Why, of course I can. Step out Chispa Charlie, my old pard."

At the words of the scout a man stepped out of the group of drivers and advanced toward Buffalo Bill, with the remark:

"Here I am, Pard Bill, to take the old hearse to my grave."

A wild yell of admiration burst from the crowd at this bold act, and then a voice called out:

"You makes number thirteen, Chispa Charlie, and its a bad-luck number."

A silence followed these words, which Chispa Charlie broke with:

"I am ready for the run when Boss Pete gives the word."

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOUT'S REPORT.

Another cheer greeted his fearless words, and Buffalo Bill said, as he glanced over the group of drivers: "And you, Ben Bolt, will take the coach if Chispa Charlie goes under."

"I'm yer man, Bill, if yer says so," and Ben Bolt, a tall, gaunt specimen of manhood, stepped to the side of Chispa Charlie.

He, too, was greeted with a cheer, and the scout then said, while the crowd of drivers began to move uneasily and look anxious:

"And there is Harkaway Harry, Pete Porter, who will take the reins if Chispa Charlie and Ben Bolt go under."

In perfect silence did Harkaway Harry step to the side of the other two volunteers.

He was a handsome fellow, with bronzed face and not over thirty years of age, but a splendid driver and one who had made a record.

He, too, received a burst of applause that was deafening, and Buffalo Bill, still looking over the drivers, said:

"And Bony will go, if Harkaway Harry is killed."

"I'm blessed if I do," was the emphatic reply of the driver, and a roar of laughter followed, while he continued:

"If yer hed called on me first, Bill Cody, I'd hev been yer man; but with Chispa Charlie, Ben Bolt and Harkaway Harry driving ther hearse to their own funeral, I'm going ter call it off, for I don't go."

"And you, Brighton?"

"I'm no coward, Buffalo Bill, but I won't drive if those three boys goes under, following to the grave the brave fellows who has already passed in their chips."

"Well, Brackett, what do you say?" asked Cody, glancing at another of the drivers.

"Any other run for me but ther Fatal Trail, Buffalo Bill," was the decided answer.

"And, Hawkins, how is it with you?"

"I don't drive through Death's Cañon."

"And Mabry?"

"I hain't drivin' my own hearse, Bill Cody."

"Dave Proctor, you'll go if the others fall?"

"I'll not go, and they is fools ter play ag'in a game which is dead sart'in ter win."

"Well, Pete, you have three brave fellows to tie to, and if they go under, send me word and I'll get you a man who will drive the Fatal Trail, so call upon me," and Buffalo Bill rode on his way.

Fort Rest had gotten its name from the fact that the small army, pushed rapidly to the wilderness to fight back redskins, had there come to a halt and built a stockade post, which had afterward been strengthened into a permanent outpost and made a fort.

It was well located for defense, and held a position from which offensive operations could readily be made.

It was distant from Trail End City, the place where the Overland trails centered and had a terminus, some fifty miles, and it had been found necessary to place another outpost sixty miles farther away from Fort Rest, as an advanced guard.

Winter had caught the post without sufficient provisions, and, unable to get supplies, a number of men had starved to death.

With the coming of spring the post had also been strongly fortified and was known as Fort Famine.

It was between these two forts, Rest and Famine, at an equal distance from each, that the trail ran through the Death's Cañon.

A battle between Indians, the Sioux and Pawnees, had been fought here and strewed the cañon with human bones.

Then a fight between United States cavalry and redskins had been fought in the cañon several years after, and the result was that many new graves dotted the scene.

The relief going to the aid of Fort Famine, with supplies, had been attacked there by redskins and massacred, and this added but another horror to Death's Cañon.

As there was a rich mining country beyond Fort Famine, the Overland Stage Company had found it expedient to run a coach through each week, and back to Trail End City.

But the horrors of Death's Cañon were added to, as there was a stageload of passengers, with the driver, slain and robbed there.

Deaths in the coaches and of the drivers followed frequently, until the cañon became known as the Fatal Trail.

Both Indians and road agents were said to be the murderers and robbers, but about this opinions differed.

It was thought to establish a picket there, but no

water or grass could be found within ten miles upon either side, and nothing but a very large force would have dared remain, as the redskins could sweep down from the mountains in numbers and annihilate them.

Colonel Miles, commanding the outpost line, had all that he could attend to with the soldiers under his command at the two forts and the country adjacent, so that the Overland coaches had to take their chances, protected as best they could be by a squad of cavalry, or several scouts.

Such was the situation at the time when Buffalo Bill got the three volunteer drivers to decide to take a coach through, two weeks having elapsed since the run had been made.

Upon his return from Trail End City to Fort Rest, Buffalo Bill went at once to headquarters to report to Colonel Miles.

That gallant officer received him cordially, and quickly asked:

"Back so soon, Cody?"

"Yes, colonel; I was not detained long."

"Well, what luck?"

"The coach goes through to-morrow, sir."

"Good!"

"And what fellow drives it?"

"Chispa Charlie, sir."

"I wish I could give him an escort, but I dare not, for we cannot afford to lose any of our soldiers now; I fear he will be killed."

"I feel almost certain of it, sir; but he is a driver, and duty calls him to sacrifice himself."

"True; but if he falls no other man will dare go."

"Yes, sir, Ben Bolt has volunteered to take the coach if Chispa Charlie falls."

"He, too, has nerve, and it will be a pity to see him go under, and, if he does, then that ends trying to keep the Overland coaches running until my force is stronger."

"No, sir, for Harkaway Harry will go if Ben Bolt goes under."

"Ah! he, too, is a plucky one. He is the man, is he not, who so well imitates a bugle call?"

"Yes, sir, and so gained the name of Harkaway Harry."

"You surely got no others to volunteer?"

"Not another man would do so, sir."

"Then, if those three men fall, I shall order Peter to stop the attempt to run the coaches."

"There is one more chance, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Who is he?"

"That, sir, I cannot now tell you, but if those three men fall, I have a man who will take the coach through."

"If he falls also, then it will be time to stop the coaches."

"I should think so; but I am interested in knowing who this plucky fellow can be, Cody."

"You shall know in good time, colonel, so pardon me for refusing to tell you now."

"Certainly, Cody, and if he is your choice, I have faith in him," was the colonel's reply.

CHAPTER III.

CHISPA CHARLIE'S RUN.

The coaches from the three trails leading into Trail End City came into that halting-place one by one.

The one from the east arrived at sunset, giving the passengers a night's rest at Pete Porter's hotel, "The Wayside."

The coach from the north came in at midnight, and the one from the southward at dawn.

At sunrise the coach going west was to start, the one through Fort Rest, through the Fatal Trail, and thence on to Fort Fame, and Chispa Charlie was to take it out.

There were at Trail End City three passengers waiting to go on to the Sunset Mines beyond, and in the vicinity of Fort Fame, and upon the three coaches coming in were five other passengers.

Two of these were for Fort Rest, the other three for Fort Fame, and one of the latter was a young girl of sixteen, the daughter of an officer at the fort, another being the wife of a sergeant, the third a soldier, a young man and new recruit.

So Chispa Charlie had eight passengers to go through with him, and the young girl had spoken for the box seat.

Every eye was upon Chispa Charlie as he came out of The Wayside after breakfast and lighted his cigar.

His face was unruffled, though perhaps a trifle pale, and yet his look was one in which there was not an atom of fear.

The young girl—a perfect beauty and bright as a lark—must also have known of the full danger of the road, yet did not show that she held any dread of it.

There were others of the passengers who looked uneasy, however, and the two whose journey was to end at Fort Rest had a satisfied expression upon their faces.

Every eye was upon Chispa Charlie, and the drivers, his pards of the reins, came forward and grasped his hand as though in a last farewell.

Then he mounted to his box, there was a roaring cheer for his pluck, for all of Trail End City had gathered there to see him take his departure, and the Overland boss gave the word:

"Time's up, Chispa Charlie, and Heaven protect you.

"Go!"

A crack of the whip and the team of six horses bounded away on their run to Fort Rest.

Fifteen miles out there was a relay and fresh horses were hitched up in place of the others, and twenty miles further another team was put in.

Then it was about a fifteen-mile run to Fort Rest.

Chispa Charlie had made good time, had been greatly entertained by the conversation of his fair companion, and, including his two halts at the relay corrals, had made the run in eight hours, coming in sight of the fort just at two o'clock.

"See here, miss, I wants you to do me a favor," he said to the young girl.

"Certainly—what is it, sir?" was the ready answer.

"I wants you to stop over at Fort Rest until this trail is safe ter travel, and ter keep ther sergeant's wife with yer."

"Not I."

"Yer see, miss, I knows yer is game, but then there is something awful mysterious about ther killing at Death's Cañon, and there is women in ther graves there as well as men. I hain't hurt ter see men face death, but when it comes to a woman, and especially a pretty gal like you, I draws out ther game, so I asks yer ter stay at ther fort, and keep ther sergeant's wife with yer."

"No, Chispa Charlie, I started to rejoin my father, knowing the dangers I had to face, and I shall go on my way with you," was the determined reply of the maiden.

"I'm sorry, miss; but I hopes the colonel won't let yer go."

"My father may be under Colonel Miles' orders, but I am not, and I go through.

"What time will we reach Fort Famine?"

"We are due there at midnight, miss," was the significant reply.

"Well, my ticket reads to Fort Famine, and I go with the coach."

Chispa Charlie sighed but said no more, and soon after blew the bugle call to announce the coming of the coach.

"Now, let me have your bugle," said the maiden, and she at once began to ring off a most stirring air, to the great delight of Chispa Charlie.

As the bugle notes died away the coach dashed up to the station in the fort, and the driver was greeted with a cheer, for all knew the chances the brave fellow had taken to go through to Fort Famine.

The horses were quickly replaced by fresh ones, time was allowed for the travelers to get dinner, and, minus the two who were to remain at the fort, the coach rolled on its way, followed by many eyes that felt that they looked for the last time upon at least some of those who were to face the dangers of the Death's Cañon.

The coach had been gone an hour or more when Colonel Miles came out of his quarters, attended by a group of officers, and in the midst of whom was Buffalo Bill, for a war council had been held, which the chief of scouts had been asked to attend.

"The coach has not come through yet, Cody, so your man, Chispa Charlie, must have backed down at the last minute," said the colonel.

Before Buffalo Bill could reply an orderly approached with the mail bag and handed it to the adjutant.

"What, orderly, has the coach arrived?" cried the colonel, for the stage station was at the other end of the fort, nearly half a mile from his headquarters.

"Yes, sir, over an hour ago, but I did not wish to disturb you, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Then I retract the remark against Chispa Charlie, Cody."

"Who was the driver, orderly?" quickly asked Buffalo Bill.

"Chispa Charlie, sir, and he was as chipper as could be."

"Orderly, I expected the daughter of Major Ambrose Dean on that coach, on her way to join her father at Fort Famine.

"Was she along?"

"Yes, sir, and she went on with Chispa Charlie and his other five passengers, sir."

Colonel Miles turned pale at hearing this, while he said:

"Great Heavens! her father asked me to stop her here."

"The coach must have been ahead of time, orderly."

"Half an hour, sir, and did not stop long, for the driver wanted to get through Death's Cañon before night."

"Quick, Captain May, take a squad of your men and ride with all haste after the coach, carrying a led horse along for Miss Hortense Dean to return on, for you must fetch her back with you."

"Tell her that such are my orders, and you, Cody, go as guide for the captain."

"Yes, sir; but suppose she will not come, for she is a woman?"

"But she must."

"Still, Colonel Miles, I cannot force her to do so," Captain May remarked.

"Then, if she refuses all your powers of persuasion, command her, and, if she still remains obdurate, then escort the coach through to Fort Famine, for I must delay our intended move until your return, that is all," was the answer.

Buffalo Bill had already hastened away, and the captain went quickly to his quarters.

But it was a quarter of an hour before sixteen gallant troopers, under a sergeant, reported at his quarters ready for the ride.

Buffalo Bill, with two of his scouts, awaited them at the stockade gate, and when all was ready, the party started off on the trail of the coach just one hour and forty minutes after its departure.

"A stern chase is a long one, Cody, and the coach is all of twelve miles away, if not more, so set the pace," said Captain May.

With these instructions Buffalo Bill set a rattling pace, which he soon saw was too fast for the heavier horses of the troopers, so he slackened it somewhat after several miles had been gone over.

"The Death's Cañon is a trifle nearer Fort Rest, sir, than Fort Famine, just about twenty-eight miles away, and I fear we will hardly reach there before the coach enters it, for Chispa Charlie never spares his horses, and takes no note of schedule time, for he

pushes right through," said Cody when a halt was made, ten miles out at a brook.

"Well, Cody, what have you to suggest?" asked Captain May, who saw that the chief of scouts had something more to say.

"That you allow me and my two men to push on ahead, sir, with all the speed we can."

"You may do so, sir, and I will accompany you, leaving the sergeant to bring on the men," was the reply.

So the captain and the three scouts set off at a more rapid pace than the troopers could keep up. Buffalo Bill urging his horse to a sweeping gallop, which the others also did.

The trail of the horses and coach showed that Chispa Charlie had been driving along at considerable speed, having passed the relay corral twenty miles out from the fort two and a half hours after leaving it.

"He were going fer all ther critters was worth, Bill, and shot off with ther fresh team in ther same style, so will git through ther cañon afore dark, ef ther cattle kin hold out," said the stock tender at the relay station.

"We must catch him if we kill our horses, captain," was Buffalo Bill's response, and on dashed the party of four at a sweeping gallop once more.

The relay corral between Fort Rest and Death's Cañon, and nearly ten miles away from it, was as strong as a fort, and had three men to guard it and the half-score stage horses kept there.

About the same distance beyond the cañon was another relay corral, with a like number of guards and horses.

But none of these guards could ever tell what was the cause of the fatalities in Death's Cañon.

They did not know whether Indians or road agents did the red deeds that had caused the place to be so feared, and they were never molested themselves though always upon their guard against a surprise.

On dashed the scouts and Captain May, after leaving Relay Number Three, as it was known, and discussing, as they rode along, what the stock tender had told them.

"Chispa Charlie is a plucky fellow, Cody, and so are his passengers, for all must know what they may expect," said Captain May.

"Yes, sir; it requires nerve, and I sincerely hope

we can reach the cañon before the coach enters it, for it would be fearful if Miss Dean was slain."

"It would be, indeed," and Captain May urged the party on more rapidly.

They had left the last stream they would cross for miles, and were descending a valley road to the Cañon of Death, which was a rocky pass through a mountain range, and over a mile in length.

But, ride as they might, they saw that it was impossible to reach the Death's Cañon before sunset at least; but this meant that Chispa Charlie, who must still be half a dozen miles ahead, would have gone through by daylight, and that at least was cheering to contemplate, for ahead of time an hour or more, he might thus elude any enemy who was going there to ambush him, for certainly such murderous foes would not remain longer in the spot than was necessary for their red work.

At the pace they had ridden, Cody felt that they would arrive at the cañon nearly half an hour ahead of the troopers, and time might prove most important to Chispa Charlie and his passengers.

So down the valley trail they went at a gallop, increasing their pace as they reached the level road, and still more as they drew near the towering rocks which marked the entrance to Death's Cañon.

The dark shadows had already thrown the valley in gloom, and as they neared the pass, they beheld only darkness ahead of them, where the light of day was shut out by the towering walls of rock.

Into the cañon they dashed, leaving the light behind them, for all was gloom there, which would increase as the night settled down, for the mountain tops far away were yet tinged with the last rays of the setting sun.

But Buffalo Bill knew his trail well, and went on at a pace scarcely less rapid than in the valley.

In the center of the cañon—that is, half-way through—it widened, and there was a space there of half a dozen acres, with a thicket of trees upon either side of the trail, and huge boulders of rocks here and there scattered about.

This had been the battle grounds, the scene of the murdered drivers and passengers, and where were the graves of the slain in combat, as well as those shot from ambush.

As they neared this dreaded spot, Buffalo Bill drew rein, and, after a halt of a minute, all listening at-

tentively and hearing no sound, they moved on once more.

They had neared the other side of the open space when Buffalo Bill's horse gave a startled snort.

"Well, Buckskin, what is it?" and the scout quickly dismounted and on foot went on ahead, the others waiting.

Soon they saw a match lighted and beheld the scout bending over something on the ground.

"We are too late, sir.

"Please come here," he called out, and Captain May and the two scouts reached the spot together.

Dismounting they beheld Buffalo Bill lighting a lantern, and when he flashed its rays upon the scene all were appalled at what they beheld.

There was the coach not far away, the tired horses standing with drooping heads.

Upon the box, the reins still grasped in his hands, was Chispa Charlie.

But he was dead.

Lying upon the ground were the bodies of the three miners, and they were dead.

But, search as they might, nowhere could be found the bodies of Hortense Dean, the sergeant's wife and the young soldier.

"My God, Cody! What does it mean?" broke from the lips of Captain May.

"It means, sir, that those who have done this deed are determined to kill as well as rob their victims, and to show us they dare do these red deeds in our very faces," was the earnest reply.

"But who has done this red deed?"

"Who has been guilty of the other tragedies enacted here, Captain May?"

"Heaven only knows. But can you not discover whether Indians or road agents are the guilty ones?"

"When the morning comes, perhaps so, sir, as we are so soon upon the scene this time; but not until then."

"Now, what is to be done?"

"I will send one of my scouts back to the fort at once, sir, to report to Colonel Miles what we have discovered, and the other on to Fort Famine to report the occurrence there."

"That is right; but let us just see if we cannot find some trace of Miss Dean, the sergeant's wife and the young soldier who were reported as passengers upon the coach."

"Had we not best wait until morning, sir, so that

no other trail will be made save those of the scouts going to the forts, for we can stay in the coach, sir, and your troopers can be halted before reaching here?"

"You are right, Cody. I will write a line to poor Dean."

This Captain May did, and the scout mounted and rode on his way, the other one having already started to head off the troopers and then continue on to report to Colonel Miles the sad discovery made at Death's Cañon.

The scouts gone, Buffalo Bill and Captain May got into the coach and made themselves as comfortable as they could, anxious to get all the sleep possible, as they expected a hard day of it on the morrow.

They had staked their horses out, though there was no grass or water near for them, and they were forced to make a dry camp of it.

With the first glimpse of dawn coming into the pass, they left the coach, and while Buffalo Bill went at once to work reading "signs," the captain rode back to the camp of his troopers to bring them upon the scene.

In half an hour he returned, and when the sunlight was beginning to peer down into the cañon.

A soldier had been stationed at the opening into the wide space, upon either side, to keep any one coming from the forts back, and the others, after a cold breakfast, washed down with water from their canteens, were placed in positions by Buffalo Bill to make what search they could for any signs they might find of trails.

There were the graves of the dead Indians slain in battle long before; near were the graves of the soldiers who had more lately fallen, and in a row near the trail were buried the victims of those who had haunted the Death's Cañon to kill and rob.

Near the coach were bodies of the dead miners, and still upon his box was poor Chispa Charlie.

All had been shot, and all had been robbed of every valuable they possessed, their weapons being also taken.

But in the hard ground about the scene of death there was no trace of a trail.

The tracks of the horses and the wheels of the coach had hardly left an impression.

Each entrance to the scene of the tragedy was most carefully examined by the scout, and no trail led into it, save that of the coach and their own.

From it only the trail of the scout sent to Fort Famine, here and there, could be seen.

It was plain that Buffalo Bill was puzzled, that the king of trailers was thwarted for once in his life.

With their tired horses, the two scouts sent to the forts could not ride fast, and it was an hour after sunrise before the soldier on duty reported a force coming from Fort Rest.

Soon after another force came from Fort Famine.

With the former came Colonel Miles himself, and a troop of cavalry, and with the latter was Major Ambrose Dean, with a party of troopers, and all met in the open space where the red deeds had been committed.

The face of Major Dean was stern and white, for he was a widower, and Hortense was his only child who had just finished her schooldays and had come to make her home with him at Fort Famine, where other officers had their wives and families.

She had begged so hard in her letters to come that at last he had consented, and changing his mind when he regarded the dangers of the Fatal Trail, he had written her not to come.

But the letter had arrived after her departure, for she had started sooner than she had anticipated.

Warmly did Colonel Miles grasp his hand in sympathy, and then turn to the poor sergeant who had also come to learn what the fate of his wife had been.

"What does it mean, colonel?" asked Major Dean.

"Alas! I do not know, and Cody can give no explanation," was the reply.

"Well, her body not being here, I feel that she must at least be alive; but suffering what?" sadly said the major.

Buffalo Bill was at his wits' end, and could say nothing.

Other scouts had come with the parties from the forts, and these Buffalo Bill had at once set to work giving them no clue, and was only waiting to hear what they had to report.

While waiting he walked to where Colonel Miles the major and Captain May were.

"Any clue, Cody?" asked the colonel.

"I sent for my best men, sir, and those from Fort Famine, and all are now at work, and I hope some may be able to discover what I have failed to do, sir."

"What is your theory?"

"I can discover no trace of a trail, so that would indicate that the murderers were on foot, more like."

Indians, and yet it does not look like the work of Indians.'

"How so?"

"Chispa Charlie was shot on his box, sir, and neither he or the miners are scalped. The soldier is not to be found, and Miss Dean and Sergeant Gale's wife are missing, sir, and what has become of them I cannot say. Had Indians attacked from an ambush they would have riddled the stage with bullets, and there is not a fresh mark upon it, only those fired into it on previous occasions. All were robbed, and yet the gaudy red sash Chispa Charlie wore was not taken, and an Indian could hardly have resisted that."

"Then you lean to the belief that they were whites who did the work?"

"Yes, colonel, I do; but my men will report as they make a discovery, or give up the game, and then we may know more."

"I have been over the whole scene, and confess myself beaten."

"Then your men will surely be; but what do you think of the soldier, Miss Dean and Gale's wife having been captured and carried off?"

"That is what puzzles me most, sir."

"If the soldier had not been taken I might understand that the two women were taken as hostages, or for ransom; but the soldier's going I cannot yet comprehend."

And it seemed a mystery to all, for not one could give any clue to the mysterious tragedy, enacted there in Death's Cañon.

One by one the scouts came in and each one had the same report to make.

They looked anxious and seemed to feel their inability to make a report of some kind.

But noon had come and all were of the same opinion, that the murderers, be they Indians or road agents, had covered up their tracks too well to be followed.

As there was no water or grass near, a move must be made, and then Buffalo Bill asked Colonel Miles to allow him to drop out of the line on the march back, and returning to the cañon go on a still-hunt alone to solve the mystery.

This request was granted, and Buffalo Bill was to have provisions sent to him by the stage on its return, for a scout was to drive it on to Fort Famine, and back again to Trail End City, on condition that

the chief of scouts should remain in the fatal pass and await his coming.

That Buffalo Bill was to remain was known only to Colonel Miles, the scout who was to drive the coach, and to Major Dean.

The latter had desired to remain with the scout, but Buffalo Bill had urged so to the contrary that he had yielded, and gone back with his force to Fort Famine.

After going with the command a few miles, Buffalo Bill silently dropped out when he came to the first stream, staked his horse out to feed, and filling his canteen went back on foot to the scene of the doom which had overtaken Chispa Charlie on the Fatal Trail.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISSING HORSE.

The scout who drove the coach on to Fort Famine was a man of nerve, yet one who would not have done so had he not felt that he had his chief to rely on in the return trip through Death's Cañon.

The miners had been buried where they met their death, while the body of poor Chispa Charlie had been laid to rest in the separate row of graves which marked the last resting-place of the drivers who had fallen on the Fatal Trail.

Major Dean had returned to Fort Famine in an agony of suspense about his daughter, as had also the sergeant, but both felt they left the solution of the mystery in the hands of the only man who could solve it, Buffalo Bill.

Colonel Miles had gone back to his command feeling some anxiety regarding Buffalo Bill, for, the mysterious murderers, who never held back from a stage-load of passengers, must be in large enough force to readily get away with one man, even if he was the chief of scouts, who was noted as one "worth a dozen ordinary men."

The coach made its run on to the fort, under the scout Diamond Dan, and started almost at once upon its return, being a day behind schedule time.

The soldiers saw it go with misgivings, and many bade Diamond good-by, expecting never to see him again.

But it had been the wish of Buffalo Bill for it to come without an escort, that he might discover the mystery of the murders in the cañon.

He had explained to Colonel Miles that a guard for the coach might protect it in the cañon, but the moment they left it, there would be an attack elsewhere, and this would not be finding the murderers.

Then, too, the soldiers could not be spared for the work, and that the sure means to check the evil by finding the outlaws would be to secretly discover who they were.

The colonel and his officers realized the truth of this argument, and so Buffalo Bill was left alone upon the Fatal Trail.

It was night when Diamond Dan reached the cañon, and he drove into it with misgivings, for he was alone, not a soul caring to make the trip back with him.

He passed the scene of the murders with his heart almost seeming to stand still, and started as he went by and heard a voice behind him say:

"Ho, Dan, there is nobody abroad to-night."

"It is you, chief?" cried Diamond Dan, with a deep sigh of relief, as Buffalo Bill climbed up over the stage and came to the box.

"Yes, and I have seen not a sign of any one.

"I heard you coming, and was in ambush, ready for an attack, if any came, but they were not here to-night, and I leaped on the boot and am going on with you."

"You bet I'm glad of it, Bill, for I was scared, I admit it."

"Well, you showed your pluck in going on with the coach as you did, Dan, and you shall have full credit for it."

"But you could find no trace of the murderers, Bill?"

"Not the slightest."

"You can't think who they can be?"

"I cannot, for they have covered up their tracks with the cunning of Indians."

"Maybe they be Injuns."

"I think not; but my horse is yonder up the valley, so I will mount him and follow you a quarter of a mile behind, in case you are attacked at some other point."

"Keep a leetle closer, Bill, please, for this be a lonesome trail to travel."

"I will be within hearing, Diamond Dan, never fear."

"Yes, for there is a treasure-box aboard."

"Ah! from the mines?"

"Yes, nigh onter ten thousand in dust, I heard."

"All right."

With this Buffalo Bill got down from the box, and, while Diamond Dan drove on, he went up the valley for his horse.

To his surprise he found the animal was not there.

He supposed that he had pulled up his stake-rope and gone astray; but in searching for his saddle and bridle they too were gone.

"Somebody has stolen him.

"Well, I cannot overtake Diamond Dan on foot, that is certain, so I will camp here, look for the trail of my horse in the morning, and when I do not come in behind the coach, Colonel Miles will send after me, I know.

"But who got my horse is the question that I would like answered."

With this the scout rolled his blankets about him and sought forgetfulness in slumber.

The sentinel on the tower at Fort Rest spied in the early morning the coach coming slowly along the trail.

The horses were in a walk and came along as though they had been hard driven.

The coming of the coach was reported to the corporal of the guard, who in turn reported it to his superior officers, and soon after came another report that the driver of the coach was asleep on his box!

The gates were thrown open; the officer of the day met the coach; the team was brought to a halt and then came the startling cry:

"Diamond Dan, the scout driver, is dead!"

The words were true.

There sat Diamond Dan upon his box, his body tied in place by a lariat, his head hanging forward and the reins wrapped around his hands securely.

But he was dead, and a bullet wound was in his temple.

What did it mean? Where was Buffalo Bill?

These questions could not be answered by a tongue silenced in death, and so the officer of the day hastened to Colonel Miles with the report of the tragedy—another deadly mystery of the Fatal Trail through Death's Cañon!

Colonel Miles was astounded, startled, and Captain May and his troop were at once ordered back over the trail.

They departed within half an hour, while another scout mounted the box and drove the coach on its

way to Trail End City, several passengers going in it on the eastward run.

Captain May lost no time on the trail, but went along at a sweeping gallop toward Death's Cañon.

As he neared the dreaded spot, his horses all foaming and panting, they saw a tall form standing in the trail awaiting them.

It was Buffalo Bill.

At sight of him the soldiers broke forth in a cheer, for they expected that they would find his body only.

"Ho, captain! glad to see you.

"But what's the hurry, for your horses have been pushed hard, I see?"

"What is the hurry, Cody, when we expected to find you dead?" cried Captain May, sternly.

"Dead? Oh, no, sir; but I suppose it was because I did not follow the coach in, as I told Diamond Dan I would. But my horse was spirited away, captain, and I could not."

"Perhaps it is well you did not follow Diamond Dan in, Bill, for he is dead."

The scout started, and his bronzed face grew ashen as he repeated the words:

"Diamond Dan dead?"

"Yes, he came in just after dawn, tied to his box, the reins fast in his hands, and with a bullet wound in his left temple."

"My God! Poor, poor Dan! Oh! that I could only have followed him."

"Your horse was stolen, you say, Bill?"

"Yes, sir. I left Dan right at this spot and went up the valley where I had staked out my horse, a quarter of a mile from here. I found him gone, and that my saddle and bridle were also missing. To overtake Dan on foot I knew was impossible, with a start of a mile, and besides I wished to have a search for the trail of my horse, feeling sure Colonel Miles would send after me."

"And what was the result of your search, Cody?"

"Captain May, I flatter myself that I am a good trailer, but I can no more find the trail of my horse than I can fly."

"The ground is too hard?"

"Yes."

"Let us return to the place, Bill, and camp, so we can have another search for it."

The scout led the way, asking as he started off:

"Was the treasure-box also taken, sir?"

"From the coach?"

"Yes, sir."

"There was none there."

"Then it was taken, for there was a box with ten thousand in dust on board, so Dan said."

"I searched the coach, and none was there."

"You found the scene of the hold-up, sir?"

"No, we pushed right on to look you up."

"Well, we can see on our way back where it was, and there must be a trail leading from there."

"Yes, surely."

They had now reached the camping-place and breakfast was cooked, while the horses were staked out.

But, search as they might, no trail led away from the spot where Buffalo Bill had left his horse, though the track leading to it was plainly seen.

After hours spent in search the party started upon the return to the fort, hoping to find the trail from the place where the coach had been held up and Diamond Dan had lost his life.

With the skill of an Indian, Buffalo Bill followed the trail of the coach back to the fort.

Behind him came two scouts, who had come with the troop, and then the troopers, all watching for any sign that might have missed the eye of the chief.

Though the passing along of the troop had greatly marred the trail of the coach, still if there had been any tracks leading to and from it on either side the keen eyes of the scouts would have detected them.

But the troop went slowly along, for Buffalo Bill and his two men were on foot, and often came to a halt as they examined the trail.

But just at sunset they came in view of the fort, and soon after Captain May and Buffalo Bill were in the presence of Colonel Miles, the chief of scouts' return alive having been greeted with cheers by those in the fort.

The scout made his report, and Captain May told all that he had to say, and then waited for the colonel to speak.

"I do not understand it—I do not know what to say. When the coach next goes through, it must have an escort, though a small one, as I am determined to start to-night upon this expedition, to strike the Indians in their villages before they get ready to raid upon us, which they are preparing to do. You, Cody, I must have with the command, and Major Dean is to meet us with his force, and thus act

as a support, perhaps join us in the attack. Now who shall I have to guard the coach?"

"Allow me to suggest, sir, that you order Ben Bolt, who is the next driver, to go through by daylight, remaining at the fort all night, and to come back the following day, sir."

"I will do so, for this will do away with an escort, which I am not allowed to furnish, and only would do so in case of direst necessity. But could you not send a couple of your men, Cody, to scout in Death's Cañon, as you did, and thus serve as a protection, and perhaps discover something about those fiends?"

"I can, sir, and will do so. I will send two of my best scouts."

"Do so, and they might go to-morrow night, prepared to remain until you recall them, so that the drivers will know that there is help near."

The orders were given then for the troops to get ready for the march up into the Indian country, one troop going at once, by way of Death's Cañon, to Fort Famine, to order Major Dean also to move with his men to a certain point in the mountains, and join the force from Fort Rest.

Buffalo Bill picked out of the Scouts' League two of his men, and ordered them to take their best horses, plenty of ammunition, and provisions for several weeks, and go to Death's Cañon, or near it, where they could camp, but to be on duty by night in the cañon, and by day when the coach was expected through.

It was just after midnight when the command, consisting of five companies of mounted infantry, one battery of four guns and two troops of cavalry, with a dozen scouts under Buffalo Bill, moved out of the fort, at their head being Colonel Miles himself, who had almost stripped the stockade of defenders to deal a blow against the redskins in their strongholds.

Just before dawn, the troop having arrived with orders, Major Dean left Fort Famine with three companies of mounted infantry, two troops of cavalry, and a section of light artillery, while half-a-dozen scouts were in the advance.

With this force of one hundred men Colonel Miles hoped to deal a very severe blow upon the Indians.

The two commands met at noon the next day, thirty miles out from the forts, and went into camp until nightfall, when they intended making a forced march of thirty miles more, so as to attack the Indian

village at dawn, thus surprising them in their stronghold.

Major Dean's face was pale with sorrow and suspense as he greeted his commander, and the two officers held a long talk together over the situation and the fact that no clew had been found as to the fate of the three captives taken from Chispa Charlie's coach, or the perpetrators of the deed.

"I live in hopes that we may find them in the Indian villages, for you will attack the lower village, sir, upon your retreat," said Major Dean.

"Yes, I shall strike the stronghold at dawn, wipe it out, if in our power to do so, and retreating rapidly the fifteen miles to the hunting village, will fall upon that, thus giving the Indians a double lesson to remember, for, once we have done so, we will have troops to spare for the Overland trails and hunt down the road agents," was the rejoinder of Colonel Miles.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOW FALLS.

It was well known to Colonel Miles that there were a couple of thousand warriors in the Sioux stronghold, which he was to attack, and half as many more in the hunting village overlooking the plains, where they got their game.

But he was well aware that to keep them from getting on the offensive against the two posts, he must do some daring act that would strike terror to their hearts.

He was also aware that in the stronghold there were all of a hundred white captives, men, women and children, and these could only be released by just such a bold stroke as it was his intention to deliver.

His little army was a command of veterans, men who had long fought redskins, and knew that a stampede meant death to all, so that he could rely upon them, while Buffalo Bill and his scouts were one and all heroes.

The little army had camped in a secure hiding place by day, building no fires until after nightfall, when supper was cooked, and all prepared for the rapid march to the Indian stronghold.

The scouts started well in advance, to be sure there was no ambush, and the men, mounting their well-rested horses, and with the wheels of the guns heavily

wrapped, to prevent sound, they moved out upon their march.

At two o'clock a halt was called, for the stronghold of the Indians was in view, a mile away, and Buffalo Bill reported all quiet there.

The men and horses had a couple of hours' rest, then an early breakfast, which was cold, however, and Buffalo Bill, having explained the situation of the stronghold, there were three columns of infantry sent against it.

The guns were placed in position, to open fire when the infantry had gained places for action, and the cavalrymen stood by their horses, ready to mount and at them, when their time to strike should come, the scouts taking places where they could do most good.

Just as the gray of dawn began to steal over the mountain tops, so that the gunners could see where to fire, the order was given, and six guns, two twelve-pounders and four sixes, flashed forth red flames and sent terrific roars echoing from cliff to cliff.

The shells went hurtling down into the village, bursting viciously among the tepees, and scattering death and destruction around, for Buffalo Bill had made known where the captives were kept, so that their position was avoided by the gunners.

It was a complete surprise, and after several rounds from the guns, the infantry, with wild cheers, advanced from the stronghold at a double-quick.

As they reached the village and their muskets began to rattle, the cavalrymen mounted and rode down to the attack also.

Outnumbered though they were, the soldiers soon saw that the fight was theirs, and they pushed rapidly on, stampeding the women and children, driving the warriors before them and setting fire to the tepees.

The captives were rescued and sent quickly on the trail leading to the hunting village, whither two guns, a company of mounted infantry and a troop of cavalry were now marching.

The ponies in the corral had been stampeded, but many were captured, and within an hour's time the stronghold was a ruin, its people fugitives among the mountains, save the braves who were rallying for a blow against their victors.

Down upon the hunting valley swooped the retreating victors, and they were met by the warriors there who had been alarmed by the firing, and hoped to check the retreat.

But the guns cut gaps in their ranks, the infantry charged, and when the cavalry came in sight the red-skin warriors broke in disorder and fled for their lives, leaving their village unprotected.

Here, too, other captives were rescued, and the tepees of the redskins were set on fire.

Rapidly then the retreat was kept up, the cavalry protecting the rear, until the pursuit became too hot, when the guns would be wheeled about and the savages sent to the rear by a few well-aimed shots.

That night the soldiers' camp was besieged, but no attack was made, for the redskins had received too severe a lesson, and were not in the full force of their warriors.

They, however, sent many a shot into the camp, but retreated at dawn, and the march back to the fort was begun, a camp of a couple of days being made at the point where the commands from the fort had met on their way up into the mountains.

Colonel Miles camped on the way back, to check any advance the warriors might attempt to make against the forts in their desperation.

The scouts had been left behind under Buffalo Bill to report any movement of the redskins that might look hostile, and so the soldiers awaited their coming.

The dead had been buried, and the wounded and captives who had been rescued, a hundred in number, were sent on to the forts.

But when the third day passed and Buffalo Bill came in to report that the redskins who had pursued had returned to the mountains, and all these had been too badly hurt, and were too much demoralized, to recover for some time, the commands divided and marched for their respective forts.

The hope of Major Dean, that he would find his daughter a captive in one of the Indian villages, had not been realized, and the closest questioning of those who were rescued failed to discover that they knew aught of her.

Nor could it be ascertained from the captives that the Indians were in any way connected with the perpetrators of the foul deed in Death's Cañon, for such had been the opinion of many.

"I have only you to depend on now, Cody, so I leave all in your hands," sadly said Major Dean, as he parted with the scout.

"I shall do all in my power, major, to return your daughter to you, and to punish her kidnapers. That the three captives taken from the coach were

not found in the Indian villages is to me a strong hope that they are held for ransom by road agents, and that no harm will befall them. It is unfortunate, indeed, but from all accounts Miss Dean is a very plucky young lady, and will bear her captivity with a good grace."

"Then you will go again upon the trail of those Death's Cañon murderers as soon as you return to the fort, Cody?"

"I will, sir, and you know that I now have two men on duty in the cañon, and as the coach is to go through to-day, we may get news upon our arrival, and you shall be at once informed of the result, major."

"I thank you, Cody, and I rely upon you," and, grasping the scout's hand, the major rode on after his command.

As he passed to the front of Colonel Miles' command, Buffalo Bill was called by that officer, who said:

"Well, Cody, we gave the redskins a lesson to remember!"

"You did, indeed, sir, and one they will not soon forget, for you killed and wounded many, and it will take a long time for them to recover from the blow you dealt them, sir."

"It was a brave move, Colonel Miles, and you deserved the success you have won."

"Thank you, Cody, and a success which your valuable services made possible, aided by the brave men under my command. But now what are we going to learn at the fort about the doings in Death's Cañon?"

"I hope my two men have made some discovery, sir, and that Ben Bolt, going through Death's Cañon by day, will avoid the fate of the other drivers, but I am yet doubtful, sir."

"As I am; but what do you think of not finding Miss Dean, the sergeant's wife and the young soldier captives in neither of the Indian villages, Cody?"

"That Indians are not the murderers, sir, that haunt Death's Cañon."

"But white men are?"

"Yes, sir."

"But who?"

"That is to be discovered, sir; but they are outlaws, road agents of course."

"And where are they?"

"That I must find out, sir."

"No one reports seeing them, or having done so."

"Very few live, sir, to make any report of an attack on a coach on the Fatal Trail."

"That is true."

"Yet do you think Miss Dean and the other two were slain?"

"If so, sir, we cannot find their bodies, and if not killed, then the road agents acted differently toward them from the way they served their other victims."

"You are right, and, if they killed them, for some reason of their own concealed their bodies."

"I do not believe that they killed them, Colonel Miles."

Being ahead as a scout, Buffalo Bill was the first to enter the fort, and his inquiry regarding Ben Bolt, the second of the volunteer drivers to take the stage through, was quickly made.

The answer was that Ben Bolt had come through two days before alone on the coach, no passengers daring to venture, and that he had been detained all night, according to orders from Colonel Miles, and dispatched the following morning for Fort Famine.

He had been given orders to remain at Fort Famine all night, returning by day through the Death's Cañon.

Had he started early he was due hours before, and, even starting late upon his return, he was long behind the time for his arrival.

Buffalo Bill looked serious, and waited for the coming up of the column at the head of the command.

Those who had gone in with the wounded soldiers and the captives had told of the double victory, so that the whole contingent left in the fort turned out to welcome the command.

Guns were fired, cheers resounded and the band played as the tired soldiers filed into the stockade.

While they marched to their respective barracks, the colonel gave orders that a line of scouts should be thrown around the fort, that the guards should be doubled, and the men should, as it were, sleep on their arms, for he did not know but that the cunning savages might seek revenge, expecting to catch the garrison off its guard, by rushing in upon them with an overwhelming force of warriors.

These orders issued, the colonel turned to Buffalo Bill, and said:

"Now, Cody, you have something to communicate."

Buffalo Bill told what he had heard and the colonel also looked serious.

"I will start on the trail, sir, as soon as I have had supper and gotten a fresh horse," said Buffalo Bill.

"But you are worn out."

"No, indeed, sir; I am all right, colonel."

"Well, it would be the best thing to do, Cody, I admit, if the coach does not come in meanwhile.

"Who will you take with you?"

"I shall go alone, sir."

"Better take some force along in case you need aid."

"Well, sir, I will take half-a-dozen scouts, and they can camp in the valley this side of the cañon, where I left my horse, while I will go through alone and on foot."

"You will be taking big risks."

"It will be the only way, sir, to find out who these murderers are."

"Well, I trust all to you, Cody, only do not be too rash," was the colonel's response, and the scout departed.

Going to his quarters, he selected half a dozen of his best men, and, having had supper, mounted a fresh horse and rode away from the fort, taking the Fatal Trail.

No sign of the coach had been reported, and the more he thought of it, the more certain Buffalo Bill felt that either Ben Bolt had never reached Fort H. M. Hamme, or, doing so, had been killed upon his return, for it could not be that the brave fellow had, at the last moment, failed to make the attempt to go through.

On to the camping place at a brisk canter went the scout and his men, and there he left them, along with his horse.

He had expected to find the bones of the other two scouts there, but in the darkness they were not visible, as a short search revealed.

Then he set out on horseback, with a scout accompanying him to lead his horse back after he should have gone a few miles.

The scout went with him near to the scene so fatal to the drivers, when the chief dismounted and sent him back to the camp.

"If you do not see me or hear from me by noon, Bob, come after me all of you, for I may need you," were his parting orders.

Then he went on his way on foot, and after half

an hour approached the open space where were the graves of the dead victims of the mysterious murderers of Death's Cañon.

He went cautiously along, gliding among the stunted trees and boulders that were there, and at last saw something loom up ahead of him.

"It is the coach," he muttered, and at once became still more cautious, for a closer look through the darkness revealed the fact that the horses were there also.

But was it Ben Bolt, the brave driver?

The scout remained for a long while silently watching the coach and waiting.

He saw that the horses were restless, and swerved considerably, yet no voice was heard soothing them.

At last he said to himself:

"There is no living being there, that is certain. Poor Ben Bolt is there; yes, I am sure of it now. But he is dead."

With this the chief of scouts moved from his hiding-place, and cautiously approached the coach.

The horses quickly discovered him, and one of them neighed a welcome.

This was further proof to Buffalo Bill that if a human being was there it was a dead one.

He spoke soothingly to the horses, and saw that they were glad of his coming.

Then he approached the coach.

Upon the box he saw a dark object, and quickly he mounted to the driver's seat.

It was Ben Bolt; but he was dead!

The scout muttered an imprecation, and a quick search revealed that the driver had been shot at his post, his body falling back upon the top of the coach, the reins still clutched in his stiffened fingers.

Ben had been robbed, for his pockets were turned inside out, and to prevent the team from going on, the wheels of the coach had been firmly lashed together to lock them.

"Where are my two scouts, Bennett and Hill?" the scout leader asked himself, as he looked about him, trying in vain to pierce the darkness.

Then, revolver in hand, for he had gone about his search prepared for any emergency, he opened the coach door.

He could not see within, for it was so intensely dark; but he stretched forth his hand and felt within.

He touched a leg, and then another.

Yes, there were two forms in the coach, both in the back seat, and both dead.

"No; one leg seemed warm, and, quickly springing upon the step, he seized the hand and felt the pulse.

It was beating, yet feebly.

In an instant the chief of scouts had taken a match from his case and struck it.

The flame revealed to Buffalo Bill the two scouts whom he had sent to protect the coach through Death's Cañon.

He uttered a cry as he recognized them, in the flash of the light of the match, and, having seen that one of the men was alive, for he had heard a low moan, he took the dead one from the seat, made the living man as comfortable as he could with the cushions and closed the coach door.

Then the lashings of the wheels were cut, and, mounting the box, Buffalo Bill placed Ben Bolt on top, tying his body so that it would not fall off, and, seizing the reins, sent the horses along at a thundering pace.

They were only too anxious to go, and went at a slapping gallop over a trail on which only a driver of skill and nerve would dare force them at such a rate.

As he neared the camp of the scouts, Buffalo Bill opened fire with his revolver, and by the time he passed along the trail nearest to them, they came dashing down to meet him, mounted and ready for battle.

"Ho, men! go to the Death Cañon, but go on foot when you get near it, leaving one of your number to keep the horses.

"At daylight look for trails, and I will be back as soon as I can return and there join you.

"Ben Bolt is dead on top this coach, and within are Bennett and Hill, the latter still alive, so I am going to see if he can be saved by getting him to the fort."

With this the lash fell upon the horses and the eager team dashed away once more at the same rattling speed as before, on the trail to the fort, twenty miles distant.

Buffalo Bill came in sight of the fort just as the sun was rising.

The sentinel on the watch-tower reported the coming of the coach at the full speed of the horses, the driver laying on the lash.

Soon after he reported that the driver was not

Ben Bolt, but Buffalo Bill, but that there was a dead body on the top of the coach.

Word was at once sent to Colonel Miles, so that when the coach dashed into the stockade that officer was up and dressed.

As Buffalo Bill whirled through the gate he called out:

"Arouse the surgeon at once, for I have a wounded man here."

Halting at the station, Buffalo Bill sprung to the ground, threw open the stage door and, placing his hand upon the pulse of the wounded man, cried:

"Thank Heaven, he is still alive.

"But he has been hard hit, and more than once, too."

He then lifted the wounded scout tenderly from the coach, and placed him upon the stretcher which four soldiers had hastily brought from the hospital.

The surgeon was there also, and ordered the wounded man carried quickly to a cabin near the hospital, as Buffalo Bill said, earnestly:

"Save him, doctor, not only for his own sake, for he is a splendid fellow, but because he can tell us who these murderers of Death's Cañon are—he can solve this accursed mystery if you save him."

"I will do all in my power, Cody, but he is a desperately wounded man," was the surgeon's response.

Buffalo Bill then hastened on to headquarters, where he found Colonel Miles ready to receive him.

"You have news, Cody?"

"Yes, sir, very sad news," and Buffalo Bill made known all that had occurred since his departure from the fort.

"This is appalling, Cody, most appalling," said the colonel, earnestly.

"It is, sir, but the more determined am I to sift the whole mystery to the bottom."

"I am glad to hear you say this, Buffalo Bill, for it means that the guilty ones will yet be found and punished.

"But what is to be done now?"

"I'll send one of my scouts on with the coach, sir, and the report to Trail End, and Harkaway Harry will bring it back, and my man with him."

"But will Harkaway Harry dare drive the coach through after these last murders?"

"Yes, sir, he will, for I know the man."

"And then?"

"When he goes through Death's Cañon, sir, be it

night or day, going and coming, I will be on hand to lend any aid that he may need, and discover where these murderers are."

"Not alone, surely?"

"Yes, sir; I'll play a lone hand on the next run of the coach along the Fatal Trail, and after that, if I do not make a discovery I'll try another plan, which I have yet to make known to you, sir."

"All right, I feel that the affair is in good hands, Cody, so you shall have your way."

"Now, what hope does Dr. Brandon give you of saving Hill's life?"

"None, sir; but while there is life there is hope, is my belief, and if he can only bring him around to talk, much will have been gained."

"Let us go, then, and see what the result is so far; but I forget that you need food and rest."

"Don't mind me, colonel, for I'll get breakfast soon and then take a fresh horse for camp, where I can sleep for some hours."

"Well, we will go together to the hospital."

The colonel and Buffalo Bill then walked to the hospital and Dr. Brandon met them at the door.

"What hope, Brandon?" asked the colonel.

"I fear none, sir, for he has a wound in the left lung, and another in the right side, with a third that grazed the skull."

"Had he not arrived when he did, he could not have lasted much longer, for he was bleeding freely."

"He is unconscious, then?"

"Wholly unconscious, colonel, in spite of all efforts to rouse him; but he has a splendid constitution and may rally."

"Heaven grant it!"

"How long, Surgeon Brandon, would you think he had been wounded when I got to him, which was at two o'clock?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"I should say for four or five hours at least, from what observation I was enabled to make," was the reply.

"Then he was shot late in the afternoon?"

"He must have been."

"And in passing through the Death's Cañon in daylight?"

"Yes."

"This is remarkable, for there were Ben Bolt, the driver, and my two scouts for the murderers to face, so there surely must have been a large force that ambushed them," said Buffalo Bill, thoughtfully, and

it was evident that he was more and more worried over the continual mystery turning up in the deeds done in the Death's Cañon.

Buffalo Bill paid another visit to the hospital before leaving the fort in the afternoon, for the colonel had told him to get his breakfast and seek rest until two o'clock, as he saw that the scout was beginning to feel the strain upon him.

A scout had gone on with the coach to Trail End, and was to return to the fort with Harkaway Harry, or alone if that driver backed down.

But Surgeon Brandon could give Buffalo Bill no more hope for Hill, the scout, and so he mounted a fresh horse and dashed away toward the Death's Cañon.

He reached the camping place before sunset, and there found two of the scouts with the horses, the other having remained on the search.

Before these two could say anything regarding the search for the trail of the murderers, the other four scouts came in sight.

"Ho! pards, any news?" called out Buffalo Bill, as they appeared.

They looked a trifle confused at seeing their chief and one said:

"No, chief, we could not find even the photograph of a trail and we looked close, too!"

"Why did you leave the cañon before I came to join you?"

"Fact is, chief, we saw night was coming on, and that cañon hain't no place for live folks when the sun goes down."

"You were afraid, eh?"

"You knows us all, Bill, and is aware we don't scare easy, but that cañon, and what goes on there is out of ther common, yer see, and we put it to ther vote as ter whether we should go or stay."

"Well?"

"Ther vote were unanimous that we should light out."

"Well, boys, I can hardly believe you; but you should never desert your post, you know."

"That's so, Chief Cody; but them we was guarding was dead folks, and they didn't need us, and if live folks was about they war so hid as ter make dead folks out of us when night come on."

"All right, we will go to camp and have supper, and then I will go on foot to the cañon and see if I can find any spook or outlaw."

"Don't do it, Bill!"

"Why not?"

"Them as has turned up their toes in that cañon never gets a chance ter draw a weapon, that is certain."

"I'll have to take the chances, you know, and I was there last night."

"Yes, and Ben Bolt and two of our pards went under last night."

"They were killed in the afternoon, but, then, Hill may survive, though the chances are against him."

"I'm glad to hear that, Bill; but couldn't he talk and tell yer anything?"

"No, he was unconscious."

"Well, if he could talk he could tell it all."

"I only hope that he will be able to do so," and with this Buffalo Bill rode on to the camp.

He ate a hearty supper, enjoyed his pipe, and, just as the shadows began to fall upon the valley, started off on foot for the Death's Cañon.

His men begged him not to go, but, seeing him determined to do so, wanted to go with him.

But he said that one could escape notice when half a dozen could not, and he would go alone.

He had put on moccasins, so that his step was noiseless, and as he disappeared in the gathering gloom, he drew a revolver in each hand, thus carrying them ready for instant use.

Reaching the cañon, he moved more cautiously and slowly, and at last came to the opening which had been the scene of so many red deeds, all of which still lay buried in mystery.

He crept along among the stunted trees and the rocks until he reached the spot where he had twice found the stagecoach.

All was as silent as the grave.

No wolf was even whining around in search of food, and the weird, ghoulish spot seemed even deserted by wild beasts and night birds.

The chief of scouts stood for a long while gazing about him through the almost impenetrable gloom, his thoughts busy.

Not far away were the graves, the white boards marking the last resting-places of the brave drivers of the Fatal Trail, dimly seen in the somber light, or rather darkness, for light there was none.

At last the scout felt a drowsy feeling creeping over him.

He had gone through much, and was very tired,

so he decided to lie down and rest, knowing that he would awaken, fatigued as he was, at the first sound.

So he spread his blankets and lay down in a thicket to sleep.

When he awoke he sprung to his feet in surprise, for the sun was shining brightly, and he had not been disturbed through the night by outlaw, spook or wandering spirit.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE MORE TRIAL.

Buffalo Bill felt mortified at his having slumbered so soundly through the night, and yet he could not but think that there had been no one near, or he would instinctively have felt their presence and awakened.

His training had been such that he had come to have the acute hearing of a dog, the instinct of a wild beast almost, to protect himself and discover danger near.

He looked about him and knew that the sun was all of two hours high.

Then he searched around for any trail, but only the stale ones were visible here and there in the hard soil.

As he could make no discovery, and the stage was not due coming that way again for days, he thought it best to go back to the fort with his men, and start off again upon a lone scout just before Harkaway Harry should come through, to see what fate would be his.

So back to the camp he started, to meet his comrades coming to look for him, they having become anxious regarding his safety.

"Any news, chief?" asked one.

"Nothing, for I could find no trail of any kind to indicate where the murderers came from and whither they went."

"Did you stay in the cañon all night, Pard Bill?" another asked.

"Oh, yes, and slept serenely most of the time."

"Yer slept?"

"Yes."

"I w'u'dn't close my eyes in that cañon at night for a dozen ponies."

"Why not?"

"With all them graves around."

"The dead would not trouble you, Nick, while the living would."

"Waal, I can't git familiar with dead folks, no matter how I tries."

"When a man has handed in his chips, somehow I fears him; yes, I is afeerd o' a leetle dead body even, for they is so silent, so white, and seem to be thinking so deep about what they is seeing in ther sperit-land. No, sir, no graveyards in mine."

Buffalo Bill laughed at Nick's earnest way of describing his fear of the dead, but not another one of the scouts did.

They all looked serious, and there was no doubt they felt as their comrade did, while their commander rose the higher in their estimation from his utter disregard of the supernatural.

So back to the fort went the scouts, and Buffalo Bill made his report to Colonel Miles, with sincere regret that he had nothing to tell to cast any light upon the situation.

But he told the colonel that it was his intention to go ahead of the coach at its next run, and to start the night before, taking up position in the Death Cañon so as to be on the spot long ahead of time, and endeavor to anticipate the coming of the murderers.

"You will take men with you, Cody?"

"No, colonel, I will go alone, for a party of men would surely be seen."

"Upon one condition you can go then."

"Yes, colonel."

"Promise to obey my commands."

"Certainly, sir."

"Then you can go upon condition that you shall find the securest of hiding-places, and then, no matter what occurs, you are not to venture forth, or attempt a rescue of the driver, if there are over three men to fight."

"Three men, sir?"

"Yes, three of these outlaws, murderers and robbers, for that number I feel you can stand a chance with, but more than that I do not wish you to face, even if you have the advantage of a surprise upon them."

"Yes, sir."

"You promise?"

"I do, sir."

"Well, under those circumstances you can go."

"May I ask, Colonel Miles, if there is any change for the better in Scout Hill's condition?"

"None."

"The surgeon, then, has no hope?"

"He has hope, yet it is so faint he hardly dares express it."

"The poor fellow lies in a state of *coma*, and neither speaks nor moves."

"He may rally yet, but the chances are against him, though Surgeon Brandon is doing all in his power to save him; in fact, keeps by him night and day, for he knows how much depends upon his being able to state what occurred, independent of his wish to save him."

Soon after Buffalo Bill took his leave, and, going to his quarters, he found that there was much excitement in the fort about the murders committed in Death's Cañon.

The days passed slowly until the eve of the one on which the coach was expected to arrive from Trail End, when Buffalo Bill, after reporting to Colonel Miles, mounted his horse and rode away toward Death's Cañon to go upon his lonely sentinel duty.

Casey, the scout, it was who carried the coach of poor Ben Bolt back to Trail End City.

It was behind time, and a most anxious feeling existed among all the frontier settlement as to the fate of Ben Bolt.

All had heard how Chispa Charlie had gone under, along with the three miners, and how the young lady and the elderly woman had most mysterious disappeared, and it was not known whether they were captives or had been slain.

Then, without a moment of hesitation, in the face of such tidings, brave Ben Bolt had reported himself ready to take the coach out, even after the news had come in that Diamond Dan, the scout, had also been slain upon the box.

He had found no passengers, however, so had gone alone on the fatal run.

When he did not return on time men began to surmise the worst, and when Casey, the scout, came in and told his story of the death of Ben Bolt and the scout, Bennett, while the other scout, Hill, lay wounded, perhaps dying, in the fort hospital, there was a general murmur of indignation against the unknown murderers, and a belief that Harkaway Harry should not go.

"No one will call him a coward if he don't," said one, and he echoed the sentiments of nearly all.

If there were any who thought he should go, they were those who were his enemies for some reason or other.

The night Scout Casey brought the coach in, the gathering at the saloon of the Wayside Hotel was enormous, including all the people in Trail End City with very few exceptions.

They played cards, drank, swore and canvassed the going of Harkaway Harry, the remark often being heard that he was a fool to go to sure death.

"He hain't a-going," said a rough-looking man with an evil face.

"Who says so?" asked one.

"I does."

"How do you know, Jake Kelly, that Harkaway isn't going?"

"I knows by what I knows of him."

"What is that?"

The man saw that every eye was upon him now, a dead silence had fallen upon the room, and he had to uphold his position taken against the young stage driver.

So he said:

"I knows he hain't got ther grit ter go, and when he said he would it were jist a game of bluff."

"You lie, Jake Kelly!" rung out in a clear voice from the crowd, followed by the words:

"And I am coming to make you eat your words, so pards, give us room."

The speaker was Harkaway Harry himself, and he had just entered the saloon accompanied by Scout Casey, who had been up in the mountains to find him, and tell him of the fate of Ben Bolt.

At his defiant words and quick resenting of the charge against him by Jake Kelly, a cheer arose, while the crowd scattered right and left to open a lane between the two men, for they had learned by sad experience what being in the way meant.

Hardly had the lane opened when the two men stood alone, Jake Kelly having drawn a revolver in each hand, while Harkaway Harry had not yet grasped his weapon.

But as Jake Kelly opened fire, Harkaway Harry, as quick as the lightning's flash, had his revolver out and pulled trigger.

The bullet crushed into Jake Kelly's brain, and he dropped dead, while Harkaway Harry called out:

"Is Doc Sands here, for I've got a leaden pill in my leg."

The doctor was there, and, going to the Wayside, the bullet from Kelly's revolver was quickly extracted and the wound dressed.

"That settles it with you, Harry, for yer won't drive now," said a miner.

"You are mistaken, for I'd drive that hearse on the run if the bullet had half killed me," was the gritty response of the young driver.

And he kept his word, for, when the day rolled round for the coach to start, Harkaway Harry ordered the men to hitch up and drive around to the door of the Wayside, giving his well-known bugle call to let the passengers know that all was ready for the start.

"Heaven protect you, Harry," called out Pete Porter, and many a good-will followed the plucky young driver, as, with an empty coach, he departed upon his perilous run that must take him where all felt sure that certain death awaited him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNSEEN SENTINEL.

It was the night before the coach was expected, though, with Harkaway Harry upon the box, that Buffalo Bill quietly saddled his horse and had a scout ride out of the stockade gate with him.

Then he went to see Colonel Miles, and found Captain May with him.

"I am ready to start, sir," said the chief of scouts.

"Well, Cody, I dread to see you go alone, and yet you know best what you can do.

"But remember your promise."

"I will, sir."

"I'll court-martial you if you break your pledge," said the colonel, with a smile.

"I'll remember, sir. I sent my horse out with a scout riding him, sir, and would like leave to slip out the headquarters gate, for I wish to be reported on the sick list, and my going not be known."

"All right, Captain May will go with you to the headquarters gate, and bring me back the key."

The captain was most willing to do so, and, with a shake of the hand, Buffalo Bill left the colonel, and soon passed out of the gate in the stockade road.

"I will send the scout here at once, sir, for he is

but a short distance away," and Buffalo Bill bade the captain good-by and hastened out upon the prairie.

He soon found the scout, with his horse, and said:

"Ike, you must not be seen going back through the main entrance on foot, so go to the headquarters gate and Captain May will let you in."

"All right, Bill, and luck to you," said the scout as Buffalo Bill leaped into his saddle and rode away in the darkness.

He took the stage trail to Fort Famine, and when he came to the creek, the last bit of water for many miles, he turned up the bank, and a quarter of a mile away found the camping-ground where his men had awaited him before.

He went further up the valley to where there was an open space, and the grass was long and plentiful.

Here he staked out his horse so that he could go to the edge of the creek and drink, as well as get food, and then he went into a crevice of the rocks and cooked his supper.

This disposed of, and enough cooked besides for him to have a couple of days' cold provisions, he went on foot toward Death's Cañon.

It was a couple of hours before dawn when he reached the cañon, but he soon found a secure hiding-place, within easy pistol-range of the graves and the spot where the coach had always been held up.

Spreading his blankets, he lay down to rest, with the air of a man who had ample leisure upon his hands.

The morning came, but he did not move from his position, but as patiently as an Indian ate his cold breakfast and remained in hiding.

Just at noon he heard the rumble of wheels, and at once he was on the alert.

He had brought his repeating-rifle with him, and this was placed ready to grasp at an instant's notice, while his revolvers were in his hand, as he crouched ready to attack the moment any foe of Harkaway Harry revealed himself.

In the excitement of the moment he had forgotten his promise to Colonel Miles, and there is no doubt but that he would have fought six or eight men did they appear, for his position was well chosen among the rocks, shadowed by stunted trees, and, with his deadly aim and a surprise, he felt he could render a good account of himself.

The coach drew nearer and was coming along at a lapping pace.

It must come within twenty-five feet of his position, so he would have a good chance to see all that took place.

Nearer and nearer it came and suddenly rolled into view in the open space in the cañon, which had been fatal to so many people.

On it came, with Harkaway Harry alone on the box, his reins grasped well in hand, his whole attitude that of a man on the alert.

As it drew nearer Buffalo Bill saw that though Harkaway Harry's face was pale, it was stern and fearless, like one who would do or die.

A moment more and the coach swept by, the driver not knowing that help was near, for the bold sentinel was unseen, his presence unknown.

And out of the shadows sprung no foes, and Harkaway Harry had run the gauntlet in safety, on the outward trip at least.

"Well! that time the coach went through without a hold-up. Can it be that the murderers have gotten booty enough, or have become satiated in their greed for human life, I wonder? Ah! I forget! there is a return run, a second gauntlet for Harkaway Harry to pass through. And here I must wait, for I dare not leave my position for a minute.

"It is a long wait, but I guess I can stand it."

So mused Buffalo Bill after the coach had gone by.

He rearranged his blankets, ate a cold dinner, washed down by water from his canteen, and then settled himself on the watch for anything that might be seen in the Fatal Cañon.

"That Harkaway Harry is a plucky fellow, and I should hate to see harm befall him.

"He went by, ready to die if need be, but full of grit, as his face really showed, and it was no fixed expression either, for he little dreamed that I was near.

"Well, it's to calmly wait now until to-morrow, so I must bring my Indian training of patience to bear upon myself."

Thus the afternoon passed slowly away.

A hungry wolf trotted into the cañon, sniffed at the new-made graves, and then, scenting danger, suddenly skulked away.

A bird of prey, as though recalling a spot where it had gotten food before, flew over the cañon, and then alighted not fifty feet from where the scout lay in ambush.

Soon after several deer came bounding through

the cañon, as though in fright of pursuers, and Buffalo Bill was at once upon the *qui vive*.

But no one came into view, and at last the shadows began to fall upon the valley.

Afar off in the distant mountain tops the sunlight still lingered, but this soon faded from view and intense darkness rested upon all.

Then the scout settled himself for slumber, and was soon serenely sleeping, wholly undisturbed by his weird and dismal surroundings.

The night passed away, and it was another cold breakfast of meat and bread, with water to wash it down, yet apparently the meal was relished.

The scout was there for work, and he was willing to put up with anything to discover the secret he sought to unravel.

As the hours crept by he looked to his weapons, placed his repeating rifle in position for ready use, got his revolver within easy reach and waited.

Noon came and he was all alive for work, be it what it might.

Then came the distant rumble of wheels.

Not a human being had yet shown himself in the cañon.

No foe had appeared.

Could it be that the murderers of the cañon had really given up their red work for gold?

It would seem so. Was Harkaway Harry to pass the deadly gauntlet a second time in safety?

Such were the thoughts that filled Buffalo Bill's mind as the sound of the coming wheels grew louder and louder.

"Harkaway Harry is driving very slowly this time, not like his run through on the outward trip.

"Well, I can see no danger awaiting him here, and I am half inclined to go on with him to the camp, thus saving a walk to my horse.

"Ha! there comes the stage into view—and great Heavens! there is no driver on the box!" cried Buffalo Bill, suddenly springing from his place of ambush.

The words of the scout were but too true; there was no driver upon the box!

Where was Harkaway Harry?

The team of six horses came trotting slowly along, the reins made fast around the brake on the right of the coach.

But the driver was not there!

Did not the horses know this?

Were they not doing their duty faithfully in taking the coach to the fort?

There was no need for Buffalo Bill to remain longer in ambush, he well knew.

The harm had been done before the coach reached Death's Cañon, as once before had been the case.

So Buffalo Bill left his hiding-place and ran down into the trail.

He called to the horses and they halted.

They seemed to be glad to have the responsibility removed from them of carrying the coach to Fort Rest.

Having halted the team, Buffalo Bill walked to the coach and threw open the door, starting back at what he beheld there.

What Buffalo Bill beheld in the coach, when he threw open the door, was enough to startle him.

There sat Harkaway Harry upon the back seat, his hands and feet manacled, and his form tied upright, for the bullet wound in the center of his forehead showed that he was dead.

Upon his heart, fastened there with black pins, was a placard, upon which were a skull and crossbones in black, a red dagger, and the words in crimson:

Let another man dare drive this trail, and this shall be his fate.

Buffalo Bill's face grew stern as death as he read this placard on the dead stage driver's breast, and his eyes turned bright, while from between his clinched teeth came the words:

"Another driver gone to his death; but I will drive this trail in spite of all threats."

He placed his hand upon that of the dead driver, to discover that the flesh was still warm—proof that he could not have been long dead.

"I will drive back over the trail and find the spot," he muttered.

Then he mounted the box, wheeled the team about and started upon the back track.

His eyes carefully searched the trail on either side for the spot where the coach had been held up.

But on and on he went and no such place was visible.

He continued along the trail, however, though convinced that he had surely passed the spot where the coach had been halted.

Then a desire seized him to go on to Fort Famine.

He reached the relay and found that Harkaway Harry had passed there in safety.

"I am going on to Fort-Famine, Murdock, and shall return over the trail by night, so have the coach ready for me," he said to the stock-tender out at Relay Number Four.

"What! you going ter drive coach, Buffalo Bill?" asked Murdock.

"Well, I am, for this run at least. I shall put a man on who will go through, I think."

"Who is he?"

"Well, that is a secret, but if those mysterious murderers of Death's Cañon get away with the man I put on, they will have something to do, I can pledge them."

"Well, it's gittin' time they was worsted, Bill."

"Yes, and their time will come sooner or later."

The two assistants having hitched up the fresh team, Buffalo Bill mounted the box and drove away on the trail to Fort Famine.

He put his team through rapidly, and it was an hour before sunset when the sentinel at Fort Famine reported the coach returning.

This created great excitement, for it was surmised that Harkaway Harry had been unable to get through and had turned about, being pursued, for his horses appeared to have been pushed ahead.

Then a great shout arose as Buffalo Bill was recognized as the man on the box.

He swept into the fort, ordered the stablemen to devote themselves to the horses and have them ready to return in just two hours.

Then a guard was placed over the coach, in which was the body of poor Harkaway Harry, and Buffalo Bill went to headquarters to report to Major Dean.

Care and sorrow had left its impress upon the face of the handsome major, but he received the scout pleasantly, and listened with deepest interest to what he had to say.

"I shall take the coach back myself to-night, and——"

Bill was interrupted.

"And meet the same fate of the others?"

"I think not, sir, but I wish to find out by my return to-night, if these murderers are constantly camping on the trail or not."

"How can you?"

"If they hold me up, then they are camping upon the trail, sir."

"If not?"

"It will show that they have a retreat which they go to after the coach has passed and repassed."

"And if they hold up the coach they will kill you."

"I am not so sure of that, sir; but I must take the chances, and will, but I have certain ideas of my own which I wish to put to the test."

"Well, Cody, I must let you have your way, and somehow I feel that you bear a charmed life. You have promised to rescue my daughter, or discover her fate, and I have confidence, perfect confidence in you."

"I thank you, Major Dean, and I hope to keep my pledge to you before very long."

Of course, it had become known that Buffalo Bill intended to take the coach back to Fort Rest.

And more, he was to drive the Fatal Trail by night. Nor was this all.

As though defying death, he was to carry back in the coach the dead body of poor Harkaway Harry.

This looked like tempting Providence to do its worst.

So a large crowd had gathered to see the scout depart as driver of the fated coach, for it was the same coach upon which so many had been killed.

He had had a good supper; Major Dean had given him a handful of fragrant Havanas, and, lighting one, he mounted his box in apparent good humor with himself and the world in general.

He sent the team away at a dashing pace and soon the rumble of wheels died away in the distance, while many a head in the fort was ominously shaking, and bets were quietly made among the gamblers that Buffalo Bill was taking his last ride, that he had dared Fate too far.

But the scout held on at a greater speed than that at which the team had before been sent over the trail.

The coach was empty, so light, and there was no baggage.

The wheels had been well greased, and if the horses arrived at the relay distressed they would have ample time to rest before next coach day.

The relay was reached well ahead of the usual time for the run from the fort, and Murdock had the fresh team all ready.

Buffalo Bill had little to say, but Murdock started as a flash of his lantern showed that the body of Harkaway Harry was still inside the coach.

"You will have a new man ter drive her through

next time, yer say, Buffalo Bill?" called out Murdock, as the scout mounted to the box.

"Yes, I will," was the response.

With this the whip snapped over the backs of the horses and they were away.

The coach lamps were lighted, and cast grim, dancing shadows as it rolled along, giving a weird aspect to the flying vehicle.

But Buffalo Bill was a skilled, daring and powerful driver, and he knew the trail well.

The horses felt that they had a master hand upon the reins, and they went accordingly.

The coach came in sight of the Death's Cañon just at midnight, just the hour when graveyards yawn and spooks prowls about, it is said.

Evidently to the surprise of the horses, they were drawn down to a walk to pass through the cañon.

The coach was halted at the lone camp of Buffalo Bill, and, dismounting, he got his traps which he had left there.

Then he mounted the box again and drove on at a funeral pace, until he had passed through the Fatal Cañon.

Once more then the horses were sent forward with a rush, until again halted at the creek, when Buffalo Bill dismounted, and, hitching the leaders, went off at a run for his horse.

The animal was found as he had left it, except that there was a string about his neck, and a card attached.

Reaching the coach by aid of one of the lights, Buffalo Bill saw on the card as follows:

Don't dare us too far, Buffalo Bill!

He said nothing, hitched his horse by the side of the off leader, and, again mounting the box, went on at the same rapid pace to the next relay.

Here he halted for fresh horses, and the men seemed startled at seeing the scout driving, and the dead body of Harkaway Harry in the coach.

"We feared he'd get it, Bill, and I tell you we is getting skeered the way this killin' goes on," said one of the men at the relay.

Buffalo Bill replied:

"Don't mind it, pards, for a new driver will go through, never fear."

"Who is he, Bill?"

"You'll see."

Away he went again, and, in spite of his halt in

Death Cañon and again for his horse, he was then over an hour ahead of schedule time between Fort Famine and the relay station.

On went the team, urged to a fast trot, and, just as dawn broke, Fort Rest came into view three miles away.

The sentinel on the watch-tower reported the coming in of the coach, and a cheer rose for Harkaway Harry, though he should have come in at sunset the day before.

As the coach drew nearer a troop of cavalry was halted at the stockade gates, for they were under orders to go out and see what had become of Harkaway Harry.

Buffalo Bill was recognized on the box when still quite a distance off, and Captain May, in command of the troop, at once spurred toward headquarters to acquaint Colonel Miles with the fact.

"That settles the fate of poor Harkaway Harry if Cody is bringing the coach in.

"Order him to report at once to me here, Captain May," said the colonel.

The soldiers about the stockade gate caught a hasty glimpse of the form of Harkaway Harry as the coach rolled in, and at once their cheers ceased, for they knew that he was either wounded or dead.

"Ask Colonel Miles to kindly come to the stage station, please," called out Buffalo Bill, as he passed through the gate.

The colonel was there soon after the coach halted, and Buffalo Bill said:

"I wish you to see the situation as it is, colonel.

"Harkaway Harry passed through Death's Cañon on the outward run without molestation.

"At noon the next day the coach came in, the horses trotting leisurely along, the reins fast to the lamps, and the body of Harkaway Harry inside, as you see it now.

"That placard I left upon him, and his hands and feet are manacled, while he is tied in an unright position.

"I at once drove back to find the place of the hold-up, but I was unable to do so, and went on to Fort Famine.

"I then started back by night over the Fatal Trail, got my traps left in Death's Cañon, and met with no molestation.

"I halted to secure my horse, and I found him with that string and card about his neck, showing that he

had been visited, and my presence in Death's Cañon was known.

"I now desire, sir, to drive the coach on to Trail End City, and I will find a man who will take the coach through and return, on the run between the forts, and I believe in safety.

"At least, sir, I ask your permission to make the trial."

"You have done well, Buffalo Bill, and you shall have the permission you ask.

"If another driver is killed, however, I shall stop the running of the coaches.

"Now, about this poor fellow Harkaway?"

"I would request, sir, that his body be sent in an ambulance to bury alongside the other drivers who have fallen there, for such was his wish."

"It shall be granted.

"And you?"

"After breakfast, sir, I will start upon the run to Trail End City."

"But you need rest."

"I had more rest than I needed, sir, the forty-eight hours I was in Death's Cañon, thank you, colonel."

When it became known that Buffalo Bill had made the run, by night, too, through Death's Cañon, and with the dead driver in the coach, and was going to drive the coach on to Trail End City, there were a number anxious to go eastward with him, who had before feared to take the trip.

So, when the coach started out with Buffalo Bill on the box he had two companions by his side and no less than nine passengers inside the stage, one of whom was an officer's wife, another the wife of the sutler.

The scout-driver sent his horses briskly along, the relay stations were reached ahead of time, and the sun was two hours high when the coach began the descent of the mountain trail leading to Trail End City in the valley. Every eye in Trail End City was on the watch for the coach.

All felt the deepest interest in knowing the fate of Harkaway Harry, and if he had gone through.

The man who had killed the one who had called him a coward, before his leaving, was not surely inclined to back down when he came to the Fatal Trail of the long run.

There was many who said that he would never go through, others who added that he would never get through alive, while still more declared that Harka-

way Harry was just the man to take the chances and win life against death in the deadly game of running the gantlet.

So a great roar went up, surging from The Wayside to the cabins on the hillside, the mines, and from everywhere that men were gathered in their various occupations, or in idling.

Then a general rush was made for The Wayside to meet the coach.

It was coming, sure enough.

And more; there were two passengers on the box with the driver.

Was that driver Harkaway Harry? was the question which everybody asked everybody else.

At last the coach crossed the valley stream and came pulling up the hill leading to The Wayside.

Then all eyes were strained, and a voice rang out:

"It is Buffalo Bill who is driving!"

Yes, it was Buffalo Bill who held the reins over Harkaway Harry's team.

That all saw as the coach reached the turn in the trail that led up to The Wayside.

Boss Pete Porter was there, and he looked very gloomy.

Others, too, had a serious expression on their faces, and all waited breathlessly for the scout to draw rein before the hotel and to know what it all meant.

A few moments more and Buffalo Bill's foot went down upon the brake, he drew back the team and the stage had halted.

"I came in behind, boss, but it was unavoidable," he said, as he threw the reins upon the backs of the wheel horses.

"Where is Harkaway Harry?" asked Pete Porter, almost in a whisper.

"In his grave by this time, Pete."

"Killed?"

"Yes."

"At Death's Cañon?"

"In that vicinity?"

"How?"

"No one knows, but I found him dead, and in manacles in his coach, and his team trotting on to the fort."

"When?"

"Yesterday at noon."

"He went through all right on the run out?"

"Yes."

"But was killed coming back?"

"Yes."

"Any robbery?"

"Only Harry was robbed, for no passengers would travel, and the miners won't send any treasure along now."

"It has come to that, then?"

"Yes."

"Then that means that the stages to the forts must be taken off."

"Not yet."

"Why?"

"Because you must try still further to push them through."

"No one will drive."

"Try them."

"I suppose I must do so, but it will do no good."

"Give them a chance to refuse."

This conversation had taken place before the crowd, while the passengers were getting supper, preparatory to taking the coach going east, or in the direction they wished to go.

Now, Pete Porter called Buffalo Bill into his private room and said:

"See here, Bill, I have new orders from the company."

"Yes."

"I have."

"Well?"

"They say offer as high as three hundred for the run, and, if any accept and are killed, then I am to get up a band of seven men to go as an escort for the coach, changing their horses going and coming at Fort Rest."

"Well, Pete, make the offer and see who accepts."

"And I hope there will be some one who will do so, for, if the company starts in on this escort business, it will have to do it on all of the trails, and it will take an army to guard the coaches."

"You are right, so try the offer first."

"And if they do refuse?"

"Then, as I told you once before, Pete, I have a man who will go."

"He must be a dandy if he does."

"He is willing to take all chances."

"Is he a driver?"

"You mean one of the Overland?"

"Yes."

"He is not, but he can drive as well as any of your men, and knows the trail the darkest night."

"Then why not let him go now?"

"Because you must give your men the chance first."

"Not a man will go, I know."

"Try them."

"Then it will be for your man to get the three hundred a run."

"You are mistaken, for my man will accept no pay."

"What does that mean, Bill?"

"That he is not driving for money."

"What then?"

"Under orders."

"Well, whatever his motive let it go, so long as he will drive."

"Now, I must see what I can do among the drivers."

The coaches east, north and south having departed, Pete Porter went to the saloon of The Wayside, where he knew he would find nine-tenths of the community.

He was accompanied by Buffalo Bill, and when they entered there was a general hush fell upon the crowd.

"Pards," called out Pete Porter, the Overland boss, "I have word from the company to get drivers for the Fatal Trail."

"I wish to tell you that poor Chispa Charlie, Ben Bolt and Harkaway Harry have gone under in their runs, and yet the coaches must go through."

"The offer is three hundred dollars for the run, and it's a big amount of money to make in fifty hours of time."

"Now, who bids for the prize—who takes the purse?"

"Don't all speak at once."

But no one spoke; there was a dead silence, for there were no takers.

CHAPTER VIII.

"BUFFALO BILL'S BLIND."

For some reason Pete Porter seemed glad that there were no takers of his offer.

He urged for a while, but in a faint way, and at last, when not a soul had spoken, he turned to Buffalo Bill and said:

"You see how it is, Bill?"

"Yes."

"Not a man will go."

"I can hardly blame them, Pete."

"Well, you said that if I found no one to take my offer, you would find me a man who would do so."

"Yes."

"And you will?"

"I will."

"Who is he?"

"He's standing right here now."

"You?"

"The same."

"It's sure death, Bill."

"When my time comes to die, I'll die, no matter where I am. I'm not afraid to make the run," said Bill.

A wild cheer came from the group of by-standers. No one could look upon the great scout and see his magnificent daring and courage without being moved to enthusiasm.

"I'll start early to-morrow morning," said Bill. "I think that it would be safer if I took no one in the coach with me."

"I is willin' ter go ter help yer fight the varmints," said an old driver. "I'm plumb skeered to go by myself, but I'll go if you goes, pard."

"Thanks, old pard. I know you have lots of grit," said Bill, "but I'm going to play a lone hand this time. I'll start early to-morrow morning. Hitch up two of your best horses to the coach. Pete Porter. I'll furnish the two leaders myself."

"We have good horses here paid for by the company," said Porter. "There is no use for you to put in your own horses, which are the most valuable in this part of the country, to be shot at by outlaws."

"Don't worry about my horses, pard," said Bill; "they won't be shot. Did you ever notice that in none of these hold-ups in Death Cañon has there been a single case where the horses were shot? It has always been the driver who has been killed."

There was a murmur of assent from the crowd of men who had gathered to gaze in admiration at the daring man who had so boldly offered to run the death gantlet through Death Cañon.

"What is yer plan, Bill?" asked one of the men.

"Never mind what it is, my friend," said Bill. "I've made the trip before, and I'll make it again. The first time I made it on a scout. This time there will be a little shooting done. I'm fixing up a blind for these road agents. That's all I'm going to say about it. It's foolish to talk too much about a thing before you do it."

"What does yer mean by a blind, Buffler Bill?"

These words came from a score of voices.

"Sorry, but I can't tell you any more," said the scout, laughing and lighting a cigar. "You'll know all about it in a day or two."

"Yer is all right, anyway," said an old miner. "Three cheers for Buffalo Bill."

With a hearty good will the cheers were given by all assembled.

"Good-night, pards, and thank you for your good wishes," said Bill. "I want a good night's sleep to-night. I've got a big day coming to me to-morrow."

Buffalo Bill owned a considerable piece of property in the vicinity of Trail End City. He had received the land from a chief of the Winnebago Sioux, whom he had once befriended, and in the corral there, cared for by an old trapper who lived, rent free, in a cabin on Buffalo Bill's land, were several fine horses belonging to the scout.

It was two of these that Buffalo Bill selected to be

his leaders in running the gantlet through Death Cañon.

Early the following morning they were hitched to the coach, Buffalo Bill inspected carefully their harness and trappings.

After a hearty breakfast, the scout began his preparations for his perilous journey.

He cleaned his revolvers carefully, looked over and reloaded his Winchester, and placed another rifle, also carefully loaded, in the inside of the coach.

Those who had gathered to watch his departure wondered as they saw this, but they wondered still more when they saw him carry a heavy and bulky bundle from his room and throw it into the coach.

None of them dared to ask any questions. The night before Buffalo Bill had announced that his plans were secret and that he did not care to say anything more about them.

There was no one there who cared to incur his displeasure by pestering him with questions which he did not care to answer.

At length everything was in readiness, and Buffalo Bill climbed lightly to the high seat and seized the reins.

"Give them their heads, boys," he called to the men who held the horses.

"Good luck to ye, Bill!" called Porter.

"Hurrah for Bill Cody!" yelled the crowd.

"May you have a speedy journey!" cried one well wisher.

"And a safe return!" called another, and away went the coach in a cloud of dust and an uproar of cheering.

But there were many men who gazed after it with sad, anxious faces.

There were many who feared that the gallant scout who drove away so gayly was going to his death.

Meanwhile, the scout was whirling along on his way.

At Fort Rest, the pole horses were changed, but the two leaders remained in the harness, at Buffalo Bill's request.

Colonel Miles and several of the other officers gathered around the scout, begging him to desist from his daring undertaking.

"It is madness, Cody," said Colonel Miles; "every driver who has tried to run that gantlet has died."

"My plan is bound to succeed."

"And you won't tell what it is?"

"It's a secret until after this band is broken up."

After a hearty lunch Buffalo Bill started off again. But now he drove at a slower pace, and at a short distance from the point where the road wound through Death Cañon the scout pulled his team to a standstill. The two leaders were so well trained that they stood at a word from Cody, and the other horses followed their example.

Then it became evident what the nature of Buffalo Bill's blind was.

Unwrapping the parcel within the coach, after first scouting carefully in all directions to see that there was no one watching his movements, Buffalo Bill drew forth the dummy of a man stuffed with straw and made to resemble a stagecoach driver fully dressed.

So lifelike was the resemblance that when Buffalo Bill had perched the figure upon the box it was impossible to tell even from near by that it was not a real driver that was sitting there.

Then the reins were wound in the hand of the dummy and Buffalo Bill went forward and spoke to the two leaders.

These two dumb pards of his he had trained for many a year, and he depended upon them to guide the coach through Death Cañon in safety.

At a word from him they started at a slow trot, and as the coach swung past Buffalo Bill sprang aboard and closed the door after him.

Then commenced the running of the death gantlet. At an easy pace the coach wound down through the cañon.

Suddenly there was a flash from behind a rock, and the sharp crack of a Winchester.

The leaders knew what to do and stood stock still, the pole horses were forced back upon their haunches and the lumbering coach came to an abrupt stop.

The dummy driver, owing to the shock, fell forward, as Buffalo Bill had intended, and it looked, indeed, as if some poor driver had just passed in his checks.

Then from behind rocks and bushes came five men on foot, bearded and shaggy and looking like the rascals they were.

They approached the coach in a group, when suddenly a succession of shot so quick that they seemed like a continuous rattle came from within.

Four of the men fell stone dead.

The fifth, wounded through the leg, struggled to arise, but, before he could do so, the scout had bounded from the coach, disarmed him and dragged him behind a rock, so that he might have shelter in case there were more of the outlaws.

But there was little danger.

The raiders had consisted of five men and Red Ike, the villain who had been captured by Buffalo Bill, was the last of the band.

At the point of a pistol he told of the secret retreat where Major Dean's daughter, the sergeant's wife and the young soldier had been imprisoned to await a ransom.

Buffalo Bill found it after binding Red Ike. It

was a cave with an opening into the cañon so small that it had to be entered on hands and knees. The mouth was so overgrown with bushes that it was impossible for one who had not been informed of its whereabouts to find it.

It was supplied with air by long cracks and chinks in the rock above, and lit by torches which the bandits had arranged so that their smoke would filter through the roof.

This secure hiding-place had harbored the bandits for weeks, and as they rode no horses, and as the ground was hard and rocky in the vicinity, they had not left any trails.

In this cave, which was filled with booty and provisions, Buffalo Bill found Marjorie Dean, bound and gagged and nearly dead from the rough treatment she had received. Beside her were the other two prisoners.

It was the work of a few moments to loosen her bonds and carry her to the coach, where the great scout made her as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances. Beside her sat the sergeant's wife and the young soldier.

Then, wheeling his team, Buffalo Bill drove back toward Fort Rest.

There was a royal welcome and a rousing time, which is remembered to this day, when the scout drove into the fort with the rescued prisoners.

Then there was a lynching bee in Death Cañon a few hours later when Red Ike was forced to kick the bucket.

Buffalo Bill refused the rewards offered him for his rescue of Miss Dean and for the breaking up of the band of outlaws.

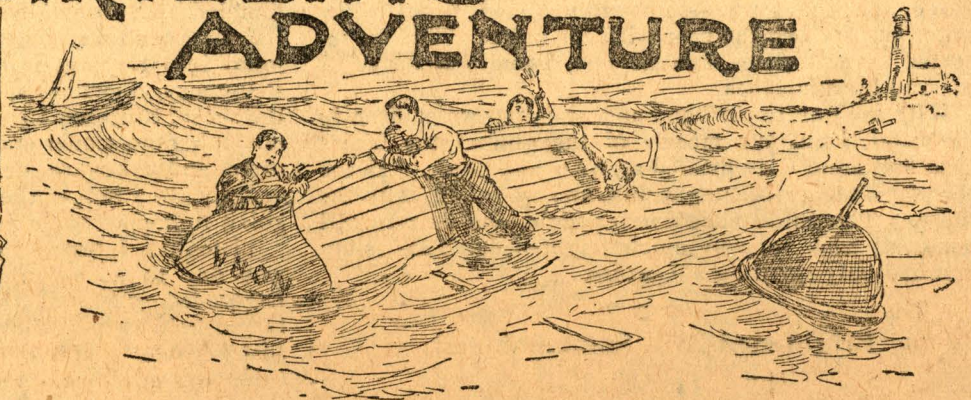
"My reward is in knowing that Miss Dean is safe," he said, "and that Buffalo Bill's blind proved to be a winner. Divide the rewards among the widows and families of the stage drivers who were murdered by the outlaws."

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 61) will contain: "Buffalo Bill and the Masked Driver; or, The Fatal Run Through Death Cañon." The scout was not through with Death Cañon yet. That masked driver will be a puzzler to you, boys. You would all recognize him if you heard his name, for you have often heard of his exploits, and yet you will not be able to guess who he is. Read the story and find out all about him.



THRILLING ADVENTURE



Swing yer lariats, boys, and have a throw at one of those prizes.

A chance for every one who can write a thrilling story. Any one of you may be one of the lucky ones.

Look on page 31 if you want to know what the prizes are and how to get one.

A Canoe Adventure.

(By Edwin Cromer, New Jersey.)

One hot afternoon my friend and myself went down to the bay for a swim. My friend, whose name was Sherwood, had just bought a canoe, so we thought that we would take a paddle first.

So we started out. We first went to the spiles, which are about half mile from the shore. Then we went to the little island out in the bay. On both sides of this island are rows of rocks which you can only see at low water.

Well, we were paddling along when "bump," and a sharp rock went through the bottom of our canoe. The first thing I heard was my friend saying:

"Ed, we're sinking."

We were both good swimmers, so we struck out for the island.

The bay was full of sharks, and I thought every minute a shark would grab one of us. But they didn't, and we reached the island in safety. After a while a rowboat passed by. It came and took us off and towed our canoe ashore, and we did not go out to that island in that canoe again in a hurry. This happened in New York Bay.

An Adventure In a Boat.

(By Roy Sherry, Pa.)

One day last summer I borrowed a rowboat and rowed over Rocky Ledge about two miles off, and moored the boat to the island, which was low and rocky, with one exception.

It had one high, rocky peak, with a flagpole at the top.

I went around exploring, getting shells and other things, and at last I got tired and was surprised to see how low the sun had sunk, so I went to find the boat, but found she had slipped her moorings. I went all around looking for the boat, and at last I got alarmed.

I knew toward evening that the high tide covered

the island, but not the peaks, so I waited, and the water rose higher and higher, so I at last concluded to climb the cliff, which was no easy task, but I remembered that I would be drowned if I did not, so I began. It was hard work, but at last I got to the top and held on to the pole.

I was scratched and torn, and still the water rose until it was up to my ankles, and then began to fall. I managed to hold on to the pole till morning. I was pretty faint and thoroughly scared. I then raised my red shirt on the pole, which was seen by a sailboat sent out to search for me.

When I got home I promised never to go to Rocky Ledge again without mother's permission.

Our Narrow Escape.

(By James Carroll, New York.)

Last year my cousin and I went camping in the northern part of Maine. Our camp was situated on the bank of a small but picturesque lake. In the vicinity of the lake the woods were filled with game and the lake itself was filled with fish of all kinds. Around the lake grew many trees, and it was a very pretty spot.

After remaining in our camp for several days, we decided to go in search of some game. Having heard some moose in the woods the night before our Indian guide took me in the canoe, and we paddled off. We paddled along the shore for some time and finally the guide stopped and told me to watch him and do as he did. He took a stick and lighted it and put it in the bow of the canoe and I did the same. With these lights we could distinguish the surrounding objects.

While paddling along the guide stopped and grabbed his gun and fired. Then we heard a great crashing in the bushes and out rushed a bear. He sprang into the lake and made for our canoe. The guide seized the paddle and dipped it into the water when it snapped into two pieces. He then paddled with his hands. The bear kept coming toward us and at last he caught the canoe and turned it over, and we fell into the water.

As we fell, I grabbed my gun. The bear swam at the guide, and the guide, seeing him, dived beneath the water and stabbed the bear with his knife. This he repeated several times, and at last, being exhausted, I came to his assistance.

With my gun in my hand and standing waist deep in the water, I put the muzzle of the gun to the bear's head and fired. He uttered a groan and sank. As the bear sank the guide caught him and we towed it to the shore. The guide made a new paddle, and we returned home all safe, but very much frightened. This is my first and only thrilling adventure.

Frightened By a Somnambulist.

(By C. Steenck, N. Y.)

One night I was awakened by hearing some one at the window.

Getting up, I saw a man come crawling in. I loaded my air rifle and fired at him. Instead of running away, he came walking up to me.

I was only ten years old at the time and became so frightened that I dropped the rifle and yelled like an Indian.

This awoke my brother, who lit the gas, and what was my surprise to see the man who lived on the same floor with us. I awoke him from a nightmare.

He was a somnambulist or sleep-walker, and had been walking in his sleep.

Broncho Busting.

(By John Roche, California.)

I am a boy thirteen years of age. One afternoon after school a friend of mine and myself went to see my father, who worked one block from where we lived. We were in the habit of going up there every day after school. So one day we went from the blacksmith's shop where my father worked into the field where they kept the horses that were not out at work so as to give them exercise. We thought we would have a ride on one of them, so we got some hay rope and haltered one in.

So I got on and just as I was about to start off my friend slapped the horse on the neck. He started off bucking and kicking, but I held on to his mane, and when I got in the middle of the field he threw me off.

He jumped on my hand and crushed my hand nearly into a jelly, and just missed my head by about three inches. I shall never want to ride a horse like that again.

Being Hazed at School.

(By Wm. Collins, N. Y.)

When I was about thirteen years old I was sent to a boarding-school in Tarrytown, N. Y. To get there I had to go by rail on the N. Y. C. and H. R. R. After my arrival there I was shown my room and told I was to report in the classroom next morning. So, after supper, I went to bed intending to have a good sleep after my long ride.

I had been asleep about two hours when I was thrown from my bed by a large boy. When I was thoroughly

awakened, imagine my surprise to find myself surrounded by a dozen boys, all of whom wore black masks.

I was then taken by them to an old bridge and told to jump into the water below or take the consequences. Being a good swimmer, I jumped in and struck out for the shore, thinking I could escape from my tormentors; but I had no sooner crawled up on land than I was captured and taken to the railroad tracks that ran nearby and, tied to a rail, at the same time wondering what was going to happen to me.

Listening, I heard the boys say that an express train was due to go by in fifteen minutes. I was terribly frightened when all the boys went away and left me bound helplessly to the rail. It then came to my mind that I would be killed by the oncoming train if something was not done. I struggled with my bonds, but it was of no use. I was bound hard and tight. Just then I heard the distant toot of the whistle on the express.

Everything I had done in my life seemed to come before me. I looked up and saw the train about ten feet away from me, then I fainted.

When I came to I was surrounded by a crowd of boys who told me I had been hazed, as all the new pupils at that school were, and that I had been tied to an old track that ran alongside of the rails on which the express came and was then not in use. It was a terrible experience, and I do not want to have another like it.

A Narrow Escape.

(By William Shannon, Ohio.)

A friend named Walter Steffens and I used to go bathing at the Scioto River dam. We always went in on the opposite side from whence we came, because it afforded a better landing-place. A long trestle spanned the river at a point almost directly over the dam, and on this we used to loiter on our way to watch the fellows dive and play in the water.

One day, when we were about in the middle of the trestle, and two ladies were about to start across, we heard the four o'clock train whistle at a little yardhouse about a mile from there. We hurried off the trestle and sat down near by to watch the train pass. The ladies evidently hadn't heard the train whistle, for they were still coming across the trestle and were now about in the middle of it. They could not see the train because it rounded a curve near the trestle and a few small houses obstructed the view beyond. We looked up and were frightened out of our senses for a few moments, for it was too late for the ladies to turn around and go back or go ahead. Around the curve came the train. Their only hope now was to step to the side of the trestle and cling to the iron framework. They both started for the same place, and we saw that it was too narrow for both of them, so we cried out for one of them to get on the other side. She reached it when the first one found out that she was alone. Then she started across to join the other one, when we yelled:

"Get back!"

She stopped right in the middle of the track and looked at us. We yelled again, and she jumped back just as the train flew past.

All this happened in less time than it takes to tell it.

but you may imagine the agony of suspense we suffered while the train was crossing the trestle. It was really going very fast, but to us it seemed like ages before it got across, for we half expected to see one or both the ladies dashed to the river below.

But nothing of the kind happened. They came off the bridge crying and scolding us because we didn't come out and carry them off the trestle or something of that kind.

Run Over By a Wild West Horse.

(By Charlie Ames, Ia.)

One day last year I was working for a fellow up in Lonbardville, and one Sunday I was going home to take my sister home and had to drive a Wild West horse and a high life horse. They were hitched to a buggy and I started home and just got a little way from the gate when I met a boy.

The wild horse tried to run away and I pulled and pulled, and I got them stopped, and they went the rest of the way down there.

When I started back my brother was with me and we came to a big bridge. When we went down off the bridge I held the horses in and the buggy ran upon them. That made them run and the seat went over and I hung on the lines and they pulled me over the front of the buggy, and the buggy ran over me.

They went on and they got loose from the buggy and ran about a mile before they were caught.

Lost at Sea.

(By Robert Glass, Ore.)

Last summer I was down at Long Beach and one day a friend said: "Let us go fishing out to the 'Rocks.'"

I said, "All right, we will go at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

The next day we got up on time and started out with our lunch and fishing tackle and walked about three miles to the "Rocks" and started to fish, but fishing was not good, and I suggested going to fish in the bay.

We reached the bay about seven o'clock a. m. and asking a kind fisherman to loan us his boat, which he did, and warned us not to go out too far as the tide was going out.

We rowed out about a quarter of a mile from shore and started to fish for cod. Here we caught quite a few fish and not noticing the tide, we drifted out in the bay.

We tried to row back, but to our dismay the tide was too strong and we were going nearer and nearer to the bar when a current brought us back to shore. Here we built a fire and warmed ourselves.

We returned the boat to the owner, and he said we had a narrow escape from being carried away out to sea.

We returned home hungry and tired, none the worse for our terrible experience, and I made up my mind never to go fishing out in a bay any more.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Side Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up, Im. Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large Ills. cat's of plays, wigs, tricks & agts. latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate finger Ring FREE, send size. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.



SEVEN COMPLETE FISHING TACKLE ASSORTMENTS GIVEN AWAY AS PRIZES

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HOW TO WIN A PRIZE.

This new Prize Anecdote Contest is on the lines of the one which has just closed—one of the most successful contests ever inaugurated. Every boy in the country has had some **THRILLING ADVENTURES**. You have had one yourself—perhaps you were held up by robbers, or were nearly run over by a train; perhaps it was a close shave in a burning building, in scaling a precipice, in bear-hunting, or swimming; whatever it was, **WRITE IT UP**. Do it in less than 500 words, and mail it to us with the accompanying coupon.

All entries must be in before September 1. The contest closes on that date.

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Look on the back cover of No. 52 for photograph and description of one of the prizes.

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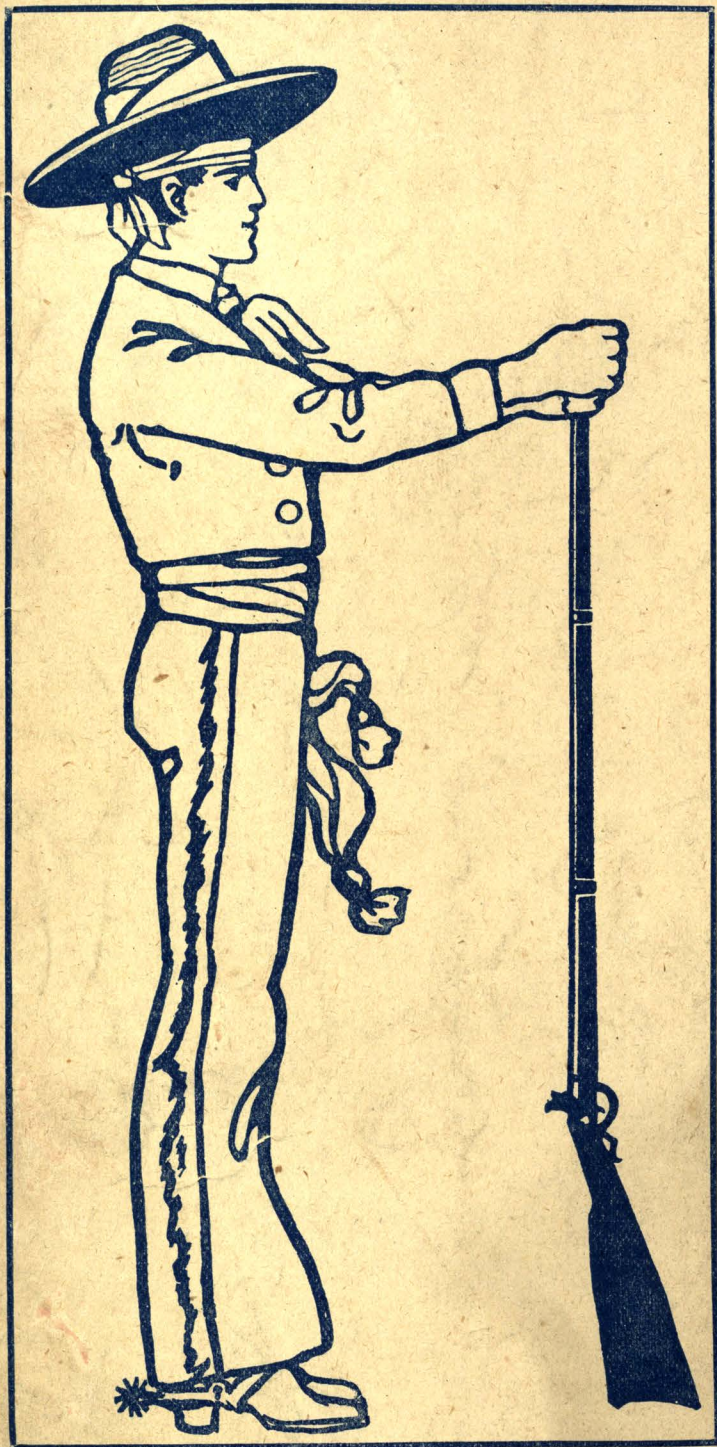
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